

A Dominant Party in a Weak State

**How the Ruling Party in Cambodia has
Managed to Stay Dominant**

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September 26, 2011

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University**

Declaration

The content of this thesis is my original work. It contains no material that has been presented for a degree or diploma of any university. To my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where duly acknowledged in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. A. K.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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September 26, 2011

Acknowledgements

There are a number of individuals and organizations to whom I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for their help and encouragement for me to start and finish this thesis. The first person is Associate Professor Peter Larmour, who has guided me with not only academic advice but also a strong sense of understanding, encouragement and care. It is my good fortune to have him as my main supervisor. Similar gratitude is also extended to David Craig, Senior Lecturer at Auckland University, New Zealand, who, to me, is a teacher and a friend.

I wish to thank my key informants in Cambodia who were helpful in giving me not only their time for interviews but also their trust and the valuable information needed for this thesis. It was beyond my expectation that some of these people, rather than telling me to go away, instead, allowed me to meet not just once but several times. To the district governors, commune councilors, party officials at all levels of the ruling party, and local people who participated in the interviews and surveys, I thank them for sharing their perceptions and knowledge, as well as the hospitality that they offered me with a smile. No less gratitude is also directed to the few officials of the opposition party and people working in donor agencies who agreed to allow me to interview them.

In Cambodia, I also thank a number of key people at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), especially Mr. Larry Strange, the Executive Director, Dr. Hossein Jalilian, former Research Director, Mr UNG Sim Lee, Director of Operations, and Mr Kim Sedara, former Program Manager of the Governance Unit, all of whom were very helpful in giving me advice for my research and agreeing to fund a small survey, some results of which are used in this thesis.

In relation to funding, no one is more important for me to thank than the Australia's Aid Program (AusAid) who, through its Australian Leadership Award (ALA) scholarship, funded my study at the Crawford School of Economics and Government, The Australian National University (ANU) for the period from January 2007 to February 2011. Mrs. Billie Headon, the Director of Student Recruitment and Alumni at the Crawford School, and her staff, with whom I had contact with regarding the scholarship, could not have been more helpful to me during this period.

Mrs. Wendy Noble, the HDR Academic and Research Skills Advisor at Crawford, was helpful advising me on my thesis writing especially during the 4th year of the study. I also received similar support from Mrs. Sue Holzknecht, my editor, who has given comments on the final draft of my writing.

Finally, I thank my parents, Pak Vichith and Khan Sohen, whose love and belief in me have been a source of my confidence and diligence. I would like to also thank my brothers, sister and a few other friends for their companionship during these years.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALA	Australian Leadership Award
ANU	The Australian National University
AusAid	Australia's Aid Program
BOG	Board of Governor
CAS	Center for Advanced Study
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CDC	The Council for Development of Cambodia
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CMDGs	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
COM	Council of Ministers
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSF	Commune/ <i>Sangkat</i> Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSPPM	Civil Society and Pro-Poor Markets
DFID	Department for International Development
DIC	Department of Investment and Cooperation
EIRR	Economic Internal Rate of Return
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Funds
KNP	Khmer National Party
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCDD	National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NPM	New Public Management
NP-SNDD	National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development
NRMLP	Natural-Resource Management and Livelihood Program
O&M	Operation and maintenance
PFM	Public Finance Management
PIP	Public Investment Program
PRK	People Republic of Kampuchea
PWG	Party Working Group
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOE	Socio-Economic
SPACE	Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Civic Engagement
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party
STF	Seila Task Force
TCAP	Technical Cooperation Assistance Program
U.N	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VOA	Voice of America

Abstract

Despite regular elections, political parties in some weak states have managed to stay in power for decades. Many scholars, in trying to explain such party dominance, have offered a variety of explanations, ranging from the ability of these parties to control the state, manipulate elections, and suppress opposition parties. The current literature is however limited in two aspects: (i) it tends to focus on one or a few of these factors and rarely takes a more systemic approach to see how they are inter-related, and (ii) analyses have been based on limited empirical data.

This study offers a framework called 'Party domination as a system' and a new set of empirical data on the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). It suggests that party dominance in a weak state should be understood as a system of interactions that takes place among three groups of actors: (i) the dominating forces (the dominant party, the state and the elite); (ii) the countervailing forces (opposition parties and donors); and (iii) voters. To operationalize the framework, the study conducted extensive fieldwork to investigate four areas of the CPP's domination: (i) its control over the state budget; (ii) its rural administrative networks; (iii) its off-budget spending on rural infrastructure projects; and (iv) its management of decentralization.

Key to the CPP's dominance, the study found, has been its tight control over the state budget and the use of that control to accommodate elite and patronage interests. Reflecting the current fiscal centralization, elites at the central level have benefited most from such accommodation strategy. However, although there has been limited financial resources flowing down to the sub-national and local levels, the party still manages to put in place a very strong rural administrative network by ensuring its control over rural administrative domains (i.e. local authority) and traditional and religious domains (especially the pagodas).

Off-budget spending is the most fascinating finding. While the formal state budget is weak and unable to meet the people's demands, the CPP has devised a shadowy mechanism called the Party Working Group (PWG) and assigned key party officials to raise their own money to help build rural infrastructure throughout the country. Through the PWG, the CPP has been able to send repeated political messages about how this former communist party has become more pro-poor, supportive of Buddhism, and able to deliver rural development, something that the opposition parties have not been able to do. The survey conducted for this study confirms that this strategy has worked well, contributing to bigger electoral victory for the CPP.

The CPP has been cautious not only about popular legitimacy, but also its international reputation. In addition to holding regular elections and being able to substantially reduce violence during election time, the CPP-led government has responded to donor demands, by pushing for various institutional reforms. In doing that, however, it has been careful, learning not to let reforms undermine but strengthen its control and popular legitimacy. The findings about decentralization reform serve as evidence of how the party has done this.

The CPP's rise has been made easier by the quiescence of most Cambodian voters, who, through their experience of wars, have learnt they cannot demand much from the state. The weak and young oppositions in Cambodia leave voters with little choice other than the CPP. These oppositions, with their limited access to state resources and

their vulnerability to the divide-and-rule strategies used by the CPP, are unlikely to pose any significant threat to the incumbent party in the near future.

This, however, does not give the CPP much room for complacency, for its continuous dominance will depend on its continuous adaptation. For instance, at least 40% of voters in the 2008 election did not vote for the party. In addition, from the next election on, about half of eligible voters will be those born after the Khmer Rouge, which means the Party will need to get ready to deal with a new kind of electorate who are more likely to demand more from the state and its leadership.

Reflecting on the case of the CPP, the 'Party domination as a system' framework is very useful, allowing the study to see that a party's dominance rests very much on its adaptive and learning capacity which in turns reflects its skill in strengthening its controls over the state and elite coalitions on the one hand, and strategically dealing with the countervailing force and voters on the other. In so doing, the party needs to constantly find a balance between control and legitimacy.

However, the framework alone is insufficient in generating new understanding about the underlying dynamics of dominant party politics. A good in-depth case study is also needed to generate new empirical data and contextual factors that shape a party's rise to dominance.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Dominant party politics in a weak state

Political parties are important actors shaping political and development discourses in many but not all developing countries. Their roles have long received research attention especially since the end of the Cold War (Friedman and Wong 2008a). From an academic perspective, political parties have also become a key variable in explaining the success or failure of democratization efforts that have taken place all around the globe. Parties' significance is even more pronounced within a commonly identified regime known as a 'dominant party system.'

A dominant party system has drawn much interest in recent academic debates (see for instance Carothers 2002; Schedler 2006; Brownlee 2007; Reilly and Nordlund 2008; Friedman and Wong 2008b; Green 2009; Lindberg 2009). These studies use different names when referring to such a political system, including dominant party systems (Friedman and Wong 2008a), electoral authoritarianism (Schedler 2006), and dominant power politics (Carothers 2002). Yet, despite the different terms, all these studies are referring to a political system which reflects the description provided by Schedler (2006:3):

a regime that plays the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections... yet they violate the liberal democratic principles... so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than 'instruments of democracy.'

This study chooses the term 'dominant party politics' or 'a dominant party system' partly to reflect its interest in the role of a political party as the central actor and as a starting point for discussion.

Recently, dominant party politics has become the topic of hot debate among academics and practitioners working on issues of good governance and democratization. The question being addressed is why and how, despite competitive democratic elections, some political parties still manage to stay in power for decades (Carothers 2002; Schedler 2006; Brownlee 2007; Reilly and Nordlund 2008; Friedman and Wong 2008b; Green 2009; Lindberg 2009). This question has been raised for both advanced democracies such as Japan, Taiwan and others, and less developed countries such as

those in Africa and some in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cambodia (Schedler 2006).

A few answers are offered in the current literature. A dominant party, some argue, uses not one but a combination of strategies to manipulate elections as well as to ensure its control (Schedler 2002; Schedler 2006). The skill with which the party employs those strategies depends on its power base and its adaptive capacity (Brownlee 2007; Friedman and Wong 2008b). However, the party cannot rely on measures of control alone. Being in power also demands that it establish a certain amount of legitimacy (meaning 'the rights to rule') in the face of the people and the international community (Schedler 2009) (The concept of legitimacy is explained in more details in section 2.4). Thus, to be dominant, the party needs to have both control and legitimacy. These two elements or factors are complementary to the party's ruling, but at a certain point, they can also lead to trade-offs, meaning more control might lead to less, not more legitimacy (Schedler 2009) (The concept of 'trade-off' is spelled out in section 2.2).

What has already been learnt is very insightful and aids in further understanding of dominant party politics. The gap, however, is that the existing literature is still broad and its explanations lack depth with regards to the causal mechanisms which help elevate and sustain a dominant party. There are a number of reasons for this lack of depth in the existing literature. First, most existing studies tend to focus on the roles of elections in such a political system and see the dominant party as just an explanatory factor of why elections have not managed to have a new party coming to power. These studies, expectedly, tend to fall short not only in explaining the dominant party and its strategies, but also in capturing what is called 'extra-electoral elements' which need to be understood in order to explain the persistence of a non-democratic regime (Snyder 2006; Whitehead 2008).

Generating new insights about dominant party politics requires a more in-depth understanding of the contexts in which such a party wields its power. Some good case-studies exist which attempt to capture such contextual dynamics (see for instance the cases of Japan (Scheiner 2006), Mexico (Green 2007), and other countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa (Friedman and Wong 2008a)). However, more effort is still needed to generate new empirical evidence so as to generate a new

analytical framework and new explanatory variables, rather than exhausting the same pool of data and attempting cross-country comparisons.

Another gap in the literature lies in the limited attempts to apply a dominant party perspective to the study of politics in developing countries dominated by a single party. For instance, Schedler (2006) provides a list of countries which are said to be ruled by dominant parties: six in the former Soviet Union, four in North Africa and the Middle East, eleven in sub-Saharan Africa, and three (including Cambodia) in South and East Asia. Yet, it is noted that many of these regimes have not been systematically studied, nor have answers been sought as to why and how those parties still manage to stay in power for so long.

This study does not mean, however, to say that politics in developing countries has been little researched. On the contrary, many studies have addressed this issue¹. The limitation, however, is that those studies tend to approach the subject by focusing more on those countries' journeys toward democracy. Despite decades of the 'third wave' democratization, many countries still have a dominant party in control. This has led various scholars to argue that, probably, now we should stop trying to understand these regimes in terms of their transition to democracy, but instead in terms of the dynamics that explain their existence and persistence (Carothers 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002).

Two bodies of literature are often drawn on when studying a developing country's politics: the first deals with neo-patrimonialism (Bratton and van de Walle 1994; van de Walle 2006), and the other examines weak or fragile states (Brinkerhoff and Johnson 2009; Oosterom 2009; Porter et al. 2010). Briefly, neo-patrimonialism is a concept used to describe a governance system characterized by a mix between legal and rational bureaucracy on the one hand, and patrimonialism on the other (Bratton and van de Walle 1994).

According to Weber, in a pure patrimonial administrative system, a government office is treated as a type of income-generating property, and the holders of the positions do not follow state rules to carry out their administrative responsibilities. This is in contrast to a rational-legal system of public management which is characterized by a graded hierarchy, proper documentation, salary scale, rule-based, and political

¹ See for instance www.gsdrc.org for a wide range of governance research topics focusing on a developing country context.

neutrality (Weber 1947, Quoted in Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002:5-7)). Many countries have officially adopted a rational-legal administration, yet patrimonial rule still continue to co-exist with, and suffuse, rationale-legal institutions. This kind of a hybrid system is called 'neo-patrimonialism' (Bratton and van de Walle 1994).

The key similarity between neo-patrimonial concept and that of weak and fragile states is that both bodies of literature emphasizes the weak governance structure of many states in developing nations. A weak, fragile state, it is argued, has a number of key characteristics: the formal state structure and bureaucracy are weak and patronage networks are prevalent. Such patronage seeks rent from the state, which in turn makes the latter unable to meet its most basic functions including provision of security, public services and rule of law (van de Walle 2005; Scott 2007).

While recognizing that the phenomenon of dominant party politics does exist, literature on neo-patrimonialism and weak states seems to be less insightful in explaining it. Scholars have only come up with the broad conclusion that a developing country is poor because its state is weak, patrimonial practice and the associated corruption are rampant, and the leadership has no political will to address these challenges (van de Walle 2006). By implication, these scholars fail to see the political and governance landscape of the countries under study from the perspective of the rulers themselves. In other words, they fail to capture the holistic and systemic picture of the way in which a dominant party rules a country.

In a dominant party system, this study will argue later, patronage and its associated corruption, while working to enrich certain individuals and their groups, is also instrumental and serves as one of the bases of power of the dominant party itself. Therefore, as some scholars have recently argued, by just concluding that patronage is undesirable and bad, the current literature does not take us far and deep enough to really comprehend what is going in a developing country's politics (Unsworth 2010).

Talking about a developing country's politics, another important literature is that on democracy and democratization. In modern times, there is no one generally accepted definition of democracy although the main features include free competition among political parties, periodic elections, and respect for the fundamental freedom of thought, expression, and assembly (Diamond 1999). Many developing countries now hold

regular multi-party elections as a way to show that they have actually embraced the notion of democracy and gone through democratization process. However, elections in many of those countries have been manipulated and other non-electoral rights have not been respected. Consequently, what so-called third wave democratization has produced are varieties of hybrid democratic regimes (Diamond 1999, Carothers 2002, Lindberg 2009).

These hybrid political systems have been called by different names, including 'semi-democracy,' 'virtual democracy,' 'electoral democracy,' 'pseudo democracy,' 'illiberal democracy,' 'semi-authoritarianism,' 'soft authoritarianism,' and 'electoral authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way 2002). One assumption is that, to different extents, these regimes have been moving in a democratic direction. Empirical evidence, however, suggests differently: some have become more democratic (Mexico, Senegal, Taiwan), some even less democratic (Azerbaijan, Belarus), and some others either remained stable or moved in different directions (Malaysia, Russia, Ukraine, Zambia, Zimbabwe) (Levitsky and Way 2002).

The evidence has led some scholars to suggest that, a new way to understand these diverse types of illiberal democratic regimes is to get beyond studying politics through the prism of democracy (for instance, see Carother 2002, Snyder 2006, Lindberg 2009). These scholars propose that these regimes should neither be seen as democratic nor in transition to democracy, but as 'authoritarianism' with adjectives, for instance, as 'electoral authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way 2002) or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Snyder 2006). One key implication from this shift in thinking is that, rather than trying to understand whether and how elections have led to democracy, scholars should try to better understand these regimes for what they are and focus more on what Snyder (2006) calls their extra-electoral factors.

This study wishes to join this new debate by trying to better understand the non-democratic regime in Cambodia under the domination of the CPP. To do that, the study uses a case study approach, taking the dominant party in Cambodia as its case. Rather than relying on the existing pool of empirical data, extensive fieldwork was conducted to collect new evidence to test the new framework which can help us to understand dominant party politics in a more systematic, empirical-based manner. The following section introduces the case and provides justification for its selection.

1.2. Dominant party politics and a weak state in Cambodia

Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia, bordering Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. Covering 181,035 kilometer squares, Cambodia currently has a population of about 13.4 million, growing at 1.54% per year, divided almost equally between men and women. More than 80% of the people still live in rural areas, and the country's population is rather homogenous ethnically. About 96% of the popular are Buddhist. The country is currently ruled through a Constitutional Monarchic system; the National Parliament is elected every five years, and a Prime Minister is elected from the winning party (Chandler 2008; Blue et al. 2009).

Cambodia has a long and interesting history, with many ups and downs. It was once an empire but then got invaded by its neighboring countries, colonized by the French, and more recently, plunged into genocide and protracted civil wars. The country's history is dated back to before the 1st century. At that early time, the country as a political entity was influenced by Indian culture, although the Indian caste system was not adopted (Chandler 2008: 27). Then came the Angkorian period which lasted from about 802 to 1431 AC. This period is generally seen as the glorious past of Cambodia (Chandler 2008). At its height, the Angkor Empire at times stretched and ruled over parts of modern-day Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and Malaysia (Chandler 2008).

After Angkor, beginning in the 14th century, Cambodia started to fall and went through various dramatic and chaotic events. These events included the moving of the Capital from one place to another, the shift to Buddhism, internal conflicts and repeated invasions and interference by the strengthening neighbors, Thailand and Vietnam. As a result, during this period, Cambodia's land had been shrinking significantly. Also, during this period, until the arrival of the French in 1863, what can now be called government was in essence personal networks through which the Kings would grant titles, wield authority and use his discretion to extract rents from those considered as coming under his patronage in exchange for their loyalty (Chandler 2008: 130-6).

Under almost 100 years of French colonization, some forms of bureaucratic system was brought in, mainly to serve French tax collection purposes. The imposed bureaucracy at the time allowed the state to reach further into the society and become closer to the peasants. It was also during this period that one started to see Cambodian peasants playing more roles in Cambodian politics (Chandler 2008). The French-imposed

bureaucracy, however, did not make the more traditional ways of administration disappear. Instead, the practices of patronage and their associated social values persisted, transformed and were mixed with the newly introduced system. The hiring of Cambodian civil servants to work for the French had also extended existing patronage closer to and extracted resources from the peasants (Chandler 2008: 173-4).

Figure 1: Cambodia map, the ruling party, and conflicts



Map of Cambodia³



The leadership of the CPP, the dominant party in Cambodia. On the right is Prime Minister Hun Sen² (2010)



Young soldiers fighting civil wars in Cambodia which started in the 1970s and only ended in 1998⁴.

Prior to the French colonization, the reach of the state to its peripheral territory had been limited. During that time, people lives were largely limited to the boundary of their villages, with very limited interaction with outsiders. The transformation to colonial administrators however changed the dynamics of village lives partly buying by brining into more contact with outsiders, including the state (Marston 1997:77).

Cambodia obtained its independence from France in 1953, and adopted a constitutional monarchy. In 1955, King Sihanouk abdicated the throne to join politics. He won the election and created a regime called *Sangkum Reast Niyum* (Society of the People). That victory signified the political rise of the now Prince Sihanouk and allowed him to

² Source: www.thecpp.org.kh

³ Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>, visited date: December 8, 2010

⁴ Source: www.flickrriver.com

dominate Cambodian politics for the next fifteen years. During the Sihanouk period, the outreach of the state to the people was still limited. The state hierarchical mechanisms were limited down to only the district level, nevertheless. As Marston observes, "If there were relatively few pyramidal links by which the grass root population linked to the upper echelons of power, Sihanouk's use of television and practice of giving speeches for mass audiences throughout the country, meant that the general population may have felt a greater symbolic link to the top of the pyramid than it ever had before" (Marston 1997: 80).

Prince Sihanouk's style of personalized power was very obvious. He used to say 'I am the State.' He was also very intolerant of dissent and tended to identify his opponents with foreign powers (Chandler 2008:231-240). The methods used by Prince Sihanouk to rule the country, together with his mishandling of Cambodia's position during the Cold War and the Vietnam War, placed his regime in jeopardy (Chandler 2008:231-240). Sihanouk's regime came to an end with a coup staged by his general, Lon Nol, who was supported by the United States. The personalization of power, the widespread use of patronage which bred rampant corruption quickly came to characterize Lon Nol's regime, all of which led to his defeat by the Khmer Rouge in 1975.

The Khmer Rouge plunged the country into its darkest age with its radical revolutionary ideas. Money, markets, formal education, Buddhism and other forms of religious practices, the freedom to dress, express oneself and move around, as well as family life and other so-called 'feudal institutions' were all abolished. The Khmer Rouge period turned Cambodian upside-down (Chandler 2008:255-76). During the Khmer Rouge period, the old administrative systems were radically replaced by agricultural cooperatives whose three members were holding real power. Outsiders were often brought in to rule specially to break down local-bonds of loyalty and patronage. The monkhood and even family networks were undermined (Ledgerwood and Vijghen, 2002:119). Yet, the Khmer Rouge brought in a new face of patronage in which patrons exercised their power in extreme ways, such as control of food and brutal violence (Thion 1993).

The Khmer Rouge regime, along with the Cambodian war legacy, also had other significant institutional and psychological impacts on Cambodia and her people. In the face of security threats from the unrest, Cambodian people have even stronger needs for

a patron to provide them with security protection and economic benefits. The issues of security left people with limited choices in buying into relationships with a patron. This also might mean that the level of coercion is also high in the relationship. Oppression and security threats have been used as a means to demand loyalty from clients (Chandler 1996: 317).

The Khmer Rouge regime promoted suspicion of one another, even within a family (Boyden and Gibbs, 1997:102), for instance, a son reported to the *Angkar* about his father stealing a chicken and had him killed. Also, in the regime, strangers were brought in to control a village, which made the feeling of distrust even deeper. These effects are significant for an entire generation of people. Hope lies with younger Cambodians (who were born after the Khmer Rouge period) especially those who have a high level of education and are less affected by the memory of wars, and yet, well reminded about the mistakes the leaders in the past have made to bring this country into such a tragedy.

The 'killing field' regime was toppled by the Vietnamese army accompanied by the United Front for National Salvation, later on known as the Cambodian People's Party, or the CPP, in January 1979. Civil wars continued until 1993 when a U.N sponsored election was held. The CPP lost the 1993 election but managed to win an increasingly larger margin at the subsequent elections (Chandler 2008). From then on, Cambodia was increasingly controlled by the CPP.

The CPP is the dominant party that this study will focus on. Its emphasis is on the party's ruling from the introduction of democratization in 1993 onward. But, first, what defines a political party as dominant? The existing literature answers this question by looking at whether the incumbents have surpassed power and longevity tests. In a parliamentary system such as Cambodia's, dominance is identified in term of seats controlled by the party. But the number varies a lot – from a simple majority to 75%. In latest work in which dominant party politics was defined, Green (2007) argues that a simple majority is sufficient for a party to be called dominant. According to Green's classification, the CPP can easily be called a dominant party. Since 1993, the CPP has won more than 50% in three of the four elections. In the last election in 2008, it won more than two thirds of the seats.

A dominant party must also pass the longevity test. On this topic, Greene argues that if a party wins more than four consecutive elections, or has been in power for more than 20 years, it can be called a dominant party. The CPP, which so far has won only three consecutive elections, has in practice been in power since 1979, that is, about 30 years. With its current strengths, it is unlikely that the party will lose in the next election (to be held in 2013). Therefore, the CPP is also argued to pass the longevity test. Trying to fit Cambodia into the power survival and longevity test is a useful categorization exercise. It is not, however, as telling as looking into the history of the party's journey to dominance itself.

Cambodia adopted democracy as its formal political system when the United Nations helped arrange the first national election in 1993. At the time, the CPP, after ruling as a communist party for more than a decade, lost the election to the Royalists. With this historical fact, one can say that the CPP is a party that has lost and won back power. Yet, even such an obvious statement is debatable, for while it lost in 1993, it did not lose much of its real influence and control over the state apparatus and resources (Roberts 2001).

The post-1993 election period was dominated largely by power sharing and a compromise between the CPP and the Royalists. The sharing did not go well and resulted in internal fighting in mid-1997, (some called it a coup by the CPP), which led to the overthrow of the Royalists and their subsequent political downfall. The CPP rushed to take the next election in 1998 and began its power consolidation. Presently, the CPP has become very dominant over the public sphere including the legislature, the executive, the bureaucracy at various levels of government, the judiciary, and the public media. With that dominance, it casts a considerable shadow over private interests and the market as well (Adler and Craig 2010).

The Royalists on the other hand had become weaker, due partly to intra-party power competition and mismanagement, and partly to the CPP's constant interference and divide-and-rule strategy. In the last national election in 2008, the Royalists won only two seats, a devastating result which eventually forced Prince Ranaridh, who had headed the party since 1993, to resign from politics altogether. The only noticeable challenger to the CPP now is the opposition party called Sam Rainsy Party (SRP)

which currently holds 25 of 113 seats in the parliament. This party too has become the target of constant interference from the CPP (Blue et al. 2009; Thayer 2009).

The CPP, from the foregoing discussion, can be classified as a dominant party which in turn makes Cambodia a country with dominant party politics. In addition, Cambodia also falls into the category of a weak state, the definition of which was presented in section 1.1. The country has suffered civil wars since the 1970s and it was only in 1998 that it was for the first time free from armed conflicts. Such conflicts, which continued for decades, left Cambodia in ruins.

The state was virtually absent when the CPP came to power in 1979. From 1979 to 1989, when running the country, the CPP's priority was on fighting and resisting the return of the Khmer Rouge and other resistance groups including the Royalists. At that time, the regime was surviving in complete isolation from the international community (Gottesman 2003). In 1993, the political landscape changed. The international community intervened and arranged a national election which the CPP lost. At this point, resolving conflicts was also the key priority of the donors who came to help. It was within this atmosphere of conflicts and competition over power and resources that the CPP managed to find its way back to power.

In terms of governance, Cambodia faces similar challenges as in many other developing countries. First, corruption is high. Under the CPP, with more resources available in the economy, patronage has become prevalent throughout the state, penetrating all levels of government. Government ministries, and the resources within their reach, have in a way become domains under the control of a few key people in the leadership ranks, who themselves play the role of patrons to those below, and of clients to those above. All together, Cambodia's state apparatus gets mixed with patronage relations consisting of many chains of mutual interests and kickbacks (Pak et al. 2007).

Another characteristic which places Cambodia side by side with many poor African countries is its high aid-dependency. In the period 1992 to 2009, Cambodia received USD9.79 billion in foreign aid (RGC 2010a). Most of this money has been increasingly allocated to high priority sectors including health, education, agriculture, and rural development. But a large portion of that money (about 25%) has also been spent on technical assistance and the hiring of international consultants (CDC 2007). Given the

money and technical assistance they provide, donors have themselves constituted another pole of power, interacting with other domestic social forces including civil society and political parties. Donors in Cambodia also experience similar problems of aid-ineffectiveness identified in other countries, including the issue of recipient ownerships, aid alignment and harmonization (CDC 2007).

Besides being a weak state, Cambodia is also a Southeast Asian (SEA) country. In this regard, despite its geographical location, Cambodia has rarely been compared systematically with other SEA nations. The main explanation for this lack of attention is that Cambodia has been too under-developed compared to these other regional nations including Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. From the 1970s to the 1990s, when these countries were rapidly industrializing and gaining wealth, Cambodia was trapped in civil wars, genocide, and was under the controversial occupation of Vietnam. It is therefore not surprising that scholars, quite correctly, tend to throw Cambodia into another research basket, i.e. the post-conflict category.

However, it is argued by some Southeast Asian scholars (Vatikiotis 1998; Case 2002; Case 2006) that it is not just economic development and the level of modernization that make countries in this region comparable. At the core of political and economic changes in these countries, they argue, the nature and dynamics of elite-elite and elite-mass relations are central in characterizing state-society relationships. These scholars also emphasize the importance of culture in shaping political and development outcomes of the country, and more importantly, the kind of legitimacy expected by the people and the legitimization likely to be taken. This suggests that Cambodia should no longer be excluded from the study of Southeast Asia.

1.3. Dominant party politics in Cambodia – Four early observations

Within the broader political context described above, this study makes its exploratory journey, starting with four early observations about the CPP and its political strategies. These observations were made when I was working as a researcher on governance issues in Cambodia from 2003 to 2007.

Observation 1: The CPP's changing electoral strategies and appeals: The first observation relates to how the CPP adapts to electoral politics. As in many other

democratic countries, political parties in Cambodia go through electoral competitions to win power. In winning such a competition, it is observed that the CPP has changed its strategies over time, shifting from the more violent and intimidating to the 'softer' and economics-related strategies such as vote buying, administrative surveillance, and various forms of co-optation (Un 2005). This is an interesting observation but what is still unknown, however, is the more concrete pieces of empirical evidence of '*how and why*' such strategic changes have been happening.

In shifting to softer strategies, the CPP has used a political movement wherein party officials, especially those at the higher level, have been travelling the country to help build schools, roads, irrigation schemes, and pagodas, and to give handouts to rural people. The Prime Minister Hun Sen is most active in this movement. According to a report released by his Cabinet just three months prior to the July 2008 election, from 1995 to 2008, 3,030 schools were built by him or in his name. In addition to schools, the Prime Minister has also mobilized resources from different 'donors' (*soboroschun*, in Khmer) to build rural roads, irrigation and pagodas. All this, the report stresses, has been done with 'his wisdom and *innovative* application of culture or the art of sharing with each other' (Cabinet of Prime Minister, 2008).

The infrastructure building by the CPP is well known in Cambodia. During the 2008 campaign, as in other campaigns since 1997, the Prime Minister was featured daily on television and in other media reading out locally-sourced lists of requests for construction projects; these lists capped off by the triumphant, authoritative and impressive proclamation '*Choun tam samnom-por*', which literally means 'Granted according to your request.' '*Choun tam samnom-por*' has become so popular that it is a cliché used in humor on radio and television, and even between children playing together. Moreover from these TV broadcasts, people started to see that it is not just the Prime Minister who made such contributions; many high ranking officials and business people with CPP connection have also participated and contributed.

Observation 2: The CPP's control over the state budget and managing budgetary reform: My early observation was that the CPP's support for rural infrastructure was done mainly off the formal state budget, meaning that it was neither financed nor spent according to the regular, annual state budgeting process and system. That knowledge prompted me to ask another question: Why has the CPP, including the Prime Minister

and other senior officials, spent off-budget money to support rural development? Why have they not used the formal budget money? These questions led me to study in greater depth the formal budgetary management and reform in Cambodia.

From my early observations, I also learned that the Cambodian budget is small. The domestic revenue per capita was around US\$75 in 2008 (for a population of about 13.5 million). For the purpose of public service provision, a significant amount of foreign aid has been received: foreign aid per capita in 2008 was more or less the same as the government's revenue per capita for the same year. The donors have helped the government to reform its budgetary system, but progress has been slow (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2003). With this additional information, I questioned whether it is the small budget and slow reform which has prompted the CPP to use the off-budget channel to support rural development.

Observation 3: The CPP's building of rural administrative networks: While the CPP-led government was slow in reforming the state institutions, specifically the budgetary system, it was noted that the party has been quite effective in expanding and tightening its own administrative networks at sub-national level. The party, for instance, is said to have been active in strengthening its provincial, district and commune branches and tightening its village level control. The recent CPP report shows that it now has about 5 million registered members (CPP 2010)⁵, and that it has been vigorous in mobilizing people to become members and vote for the party.

Moreover, the CPP has even created the sub-village (called '*group*') level. This specific observation gives me an impression that the CPP is not a loosely run organization, but one that is quite strong and solid, administratively. It is also noted that the party has given a substantial amount of attention to rural areas, considering that level as its power base. Whenever a party official, who in most cases is also a government official, makes a visit to a rural area, it is said in Khmer that '*he goes down to the base.*' This observation raises another question: How does a party whose government is criticized for being weak and slow to reform come to be so apparently effective when it comes to its own administrative organization?

⁵ This does not mean all of the 5 million people vote for the CPP. Instead, the registered members mean those who were given a party card.

Observation 4: The CPP's pushing and managing of decentralization reform: The local administrative structure relates to another observation which is about decentralization reform, first started at the commune level in 2002. The commune elections in 2002 meant that the CPP's appointed commune chiefs would be replaced by those elected by the people. When the government/CPP announced about the elections in 2001, some scholars of Cambodian politics, knowing that the local level is the key to the CPP's power base, were skeptical about the seriousness of such announcement.

The CPP surprised the skeptics by pushing for the local elections in 2002 and then again in 2007. In mid-2009, the CPP-led government took the reform even further, decentralizing not just the commune, but also district and provincial levels. Although still at an early stage, the reforms at the district and provincial levels can become much deeper and more controversial compared to those introduced at the commune level. This new stage of reform, by design, will involve taking away more resources and authority from central ministries. The question is why the CPP has agreed and managed to push decentralization ahead.

1.4. Research questions and proposed approaches

The four early observations are seen as different pieces of the puzzle about the CPP's domination strategies which this study attempts to solve and see how they all fit together. Based on the case of the CPP, the study also attempts to draw some theoretical lessons as contributions to the broader literature. With this, the study proposes its **central research question** as follow:

How has the CPP managed to stay dominant in Cambodia?

By asking the question '*how*,' this study is explicitly interested in discovering and explaining the *mechanisms* by which such dominance has been achieved. To understand the CPP's domination strategies, this research pursues further inquiries into the four observations stated earlier. Each will be studied not separately, but in ways that can bring them together to identify a pattern to explain the CPP's dominance. Thus, the questions about the four observations become not separate questions, but sub-questions to the central question. Those **sub-questions** are:

- How has the CPP managed the state budget and its reform?
- How has it built its administrative networks?
- How and why has it provided off-budget support for rural infrastructure?
- How has it approached decentralization reform?

To understand the dynamics of dominant party politics in Cambodia, this study uses the following approaches. First, the study proposes to study the CPP's dominance as a system with its own dynamics. It seeks to identify key actors, factors and relational elements that constitute the state of dominance itself. From what is already known, those *actors* might include the party, the state, the elite and their networks of patronage. Some key *factors* might include control over state resources, elite coalition, and electoral performance. Within this system of dominance, these actors interact with one another, seeking to benefit from relevant factors within a given context. Chapter 2 will have more to say about this analytical framework.

Second, this study seeks to better understand, but not to judge, what the CPP has done to become dominant. Of course, some of the study's findings will involve stating some positive and negative points associated with specific strategies used by the party. While such judgment calls are unavoidable in this analytical process, the study's main intention is to understand how the party has done, and not to impose moral perspectives on them. For instance, rather than seeking to assess the impact of specific strategies of the CPP on, say, rural development, the study wishes to understand how such strategies are actually devised, operationalized and managed. In other words, the study seeks to see what it looks like from where the CPP stands, not from a moral ground.

That said, however, the study does not dismiss the poor record of governance and human rights under the CPP's rule. In terms of governance, Transparency International in 2008 ranked Cambodia the 14th most corruption country out of the 179 nations surveyed. Corruption has also been consistently pointed to as the biggest detriment to business and investment activities in the country⁶. Human rights abuse is raised as a key concern even today⁷. These statements about the ills which have been perpetuated under, and as a result of the CPP rule are not groundless but well supported by

⁶ *Cambodia Daily*, June 16, 2008

⁷ Please see Amnesty International report on this issue by visiting <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/cambodia>

empirical evidence (see for instance Nissen 2005; PACT 2007; Adhoc 2009; Malena and Chhim 2009). However, discussing these issues is beyond the scope of this research, whose interests focus on learning more about the party itself.

Third, rather than exhausting the currently available pool of information, I conducted extensive fieldwork in order to collect new empirical data that would generate new perspectives about the CPP as a political organization and the relevant political strategies it has used to ensure its control. The study also takes into account the importance of history and how things have changed over time by laying out a broad context to track how the party has journeyed to its dominance since 1979. After all, it is only when events are examined across time that changes and dynamics can be better comprehended.

1.5. Contributions to the understanding of Cambodian politics

This study is among the few that explicitly and systematically use a dominant party politics framework to examine the case of Cambodia. Existing studies have taken various perspectives to understand Cambodian politics and democratization (for instance Peou 2000; Hughes 2003; Un 2006; Roberts 2009). In their analyses, these studies focus on various factors including historical and cultural factors, the roles of elites, political culture and external interventions. The weights given to these variables have shifted over time: those conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s gave more attention to the roles of external interventions, especially the shortcomings of the UN intervention in 1993 and how the donor community fails to help sustain democracy and multi-party elections in the country.

As the CPP was becoming increasingly dominant, the research began to give more weight to and express concerns about the rising hegemony of this party, and tried to look into the nature of political cultures and elites for an explanation (Un 2006; Roberts 2009; Thayer 2009). These studies, however, while recognizing the centrality of the CPP and elite, have not fully reflected its significance in the way they frame their analyses. Instead, they tend to explain the political changes from the perspective of an international community who is trying to bring democracy and development to Cambodia, and ask what was still going wrong.

A common issue identified in Cambodia is its patronage and rent-seeking (Blue et al. 2009). While often identified as the main cause of corruption, the functioning and nature of the patronage in Cambodia is also still a 'black box' in the existing literature. Influenced by multilateral donors such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, and also bilateral donors such as DfID and SIDA, existing research on this topic has often viewed patronage as something that has gone wrong with Cambodia's state and bureaucracy compared to the normative notion of legal-rational bureaucracy, new public management, the new institutionalism, and the expected role as prescribed in the World Development Report 1997, 'State in the Changing World' (World Bank 1997; Pak et al. 2007).

This study recognizes the existence of patronage and the various governance challenges that it presents. However, rather than seeing only its ill effects, the study attempts to understand the role and instrumentality of the patronage in maintaining the ruling party's power base. In doing so, the study brings new insights into the nature of patronage, and more importantly, how it evolves overtime. This is different from most of the existing studies (for instance Pak et al. 2007; Roberts 2009) which seem to place little emphasis on the dynamics which make patronage constantly changing, for better or worse, and what that means for the ruling party⁸.

Such shortcomings in the current literature can be explained partly by the lack of empirical data on the subject. The CPP and its key political figures, despite their growing dominance, are still little known to the outside world. There has been some research specifically on the CPP (for instance Ham 1998; Kovick and Emling 2003; de Zeeuw 2009; Peou 2010), but these studies offer only limited knowledge, and hardly go beyond the formal operation and structure of the Party⁹. The lack of empirical knowledge has led Caroline Hughes, a prominent scholar on Cambodian politics, to assert that the CPP is still largely unknown to outsiders, especially to donor community (Hughes 2009).

This study has been more successful than past research in gathering empirical data on the links between the CPP, the state, and its patronage. For instance, it presents data on the off-budget mechanisms which the Party has used to finance its infrastructure

⁸ One that touches on this issue is Un (2005).

⁹ The exception was the study by Gottesman (2003) which provides very insightful historical accounts of the party during the 1980s and early 1990s.

projects (Observation 1 above). My ability to collect such data had a great deal to do with my being a citizen of Cambodia and having worked as a researcher on governance issues for many years. With that background and experience, I have become not only familiar with the topic, but have also established credible networks with people who work within the CPP or possess knowledge about the CPP. With that network, I conducted key informant interviews, and carried out direct observations on some of its hitherto little known affairs. With this new data, the study brings new insights about the CPP as a political organization and as a network of power.

The dominant party politics framework and the new empirical data together also allow this study to look at the politics of budgetary and decentralization reform from a different angle. Existing studies on budgetary reforms (most of which are donor reports) have touched more on the technical budgeting aspects and less on the political side of the coin (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2003; IMF 2007). Recently, there have been more studies intended to fill this gap (Pak and Craig 2008; Taliercio 2008), but there is still a lot more to be discovered. This study provides insight into this issue by linking the budgetary reforms to the questions of power base, adaptability and legitimacy of the ruling party.

Much research has also focused on decentralization reform in Cambodia. Since the first local election in 2002, many studies have looked at its impacts on various issues including rural development (Abrams 2004; IFAD 2004; Aruna Technology 2006), on inter-governmental reconfiguration (Rusten et al. 2004; Flam 2008; Pak and Craig 2008), on aid effectiveness (Rohdewohld and Porter 2006), on promotion of pluralistic democratic development (Ojendal 2005; Kim 2008; Ojendal and Lilja 2008). Yet, few questions have been asked about its politics and when such questions are asked, they have been usually approached from the perspective of donors who try to promote democracy through dispersing power from the central government, rather than from the perspective of the ruling party itself.

Another gap in the literature is the lack of empirical evidence about the nature of the policy process in Cambodia¹⁰. Many key political and policy decisions in Cambodia are made behind the scenes (Hughes 2009), and so little has been learnt about it. In

¹⁰ Among the very few good studies about this topic is the unpublished report by Hughes and Conway (2004), and a journal paper by Taliercio (2008)

conducting fieldwork for this study, I had the chance to participate and directly observe the policy process around decentralization reform. Through my involvement, I had managed to conduct key informant interviews for the purpose of this study. This information, complemented by my research experience on related topics, has given me new insights into how the ruling party viewed decentralization and the notion of central-local relations, the roles of donors, and bureaucratic politics among key ministries.¹¹

1.6. Contributions to the broader literature

This study has reviewed existing literature including that on dominant party politics, electoral authoritarianism, patronage, and state reforms in order to develop a framework which can be applied to the case of Cambodia. In turn, using what is learnt from the Cambodian case, the study also seeks to make contributions back to these bodies of literature

The first literature contribution is a suggested analytical framework called ‘Party domination as a system.’ This framework depicts a system within which different actors are presented together with their interactions and the implications for the party’s domination. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, there are many studies that try to explain why a party can stay in power so enduringly. The result of these studies is often a list of explanatory factors, including state control, elite support, administrative capacity, manipulation, and weak opposition. The listing is of course very useful. Still missing, however, is a set of more elaborate and systematic explanations of (not just a listing of) ‘how’ those factors have contributed to advancing or hindering the ruling party’s interest.

As its second contribution, the study seeks to apply the concept of dominant party politics within a weak state. Many of the studies on dominant parties so far have not made an explicit attempt to combine the two, i.e. a dominant party on the one hand and a weak state on the other. In combining the two, a number of key governance issues associated with a weak state will be looked at from a different perspective.

The first issue relates to the nature of patronage and its evolution within a weak state. This question is currently hotly debated. In governance literature, a distinction is often

¹¹ More will be discussed in Chapter 3 about fieldwork.

made between informal and formal institutions. The formal institutions of the state refer mainly to the legal rational bureaucracy, while the informal is often equated with patronage (Pak et al. 2007). Implicitly or explicitly, the informal and patronage side of the coin is seen as bad and development-unfriendly.

Some recent studies, however, have begun to question this pre-judgment, arguing that a fresh look is needed to see what is bad and what is good about a patronage in a developing country's governance context (Unsworth 2010). More interest is also being shown in the evolution of patronage itself. Van de Walle for instance found that in Africa patronage practice has evolved in ways that are more responsive to the preference of the mass (van de Walle 2007). This study expects to participate in this particular debate, providing some insights into the evolution of patronage and linking it to the party dominance politics.

The second issue focuses on the question of budgetary management and reforms in a weak state dominated by a single party. Existing literature on this topic tends to use the good governance agenda to analyze mismanagement of the state budget and the reasons for its slow reform progress. The usual argument is that the states in those countries are too weak because the patronage interests are too entrenched, and that there is no political incentive to reform (van de Walle 2005; Wescott 2008). This study, in contrast, looks at the reform from a dominant party perspective, emphasizing not just the rent-seeking and self-enrichment function of patronage, but also its relationship to and implication for the ruling party's power base.

The third issue is the politics of decentralization. It is clear from a recent conference held by the World Bank in Bangkok¹² that, despite decades of implementing and supporting the reforms, donors are still poorly equipped with comparative analytical frameworks and empirical evidence from case studies to understand the politics of reform. This study hopes to draw out new ideas about why a dominant party is willing to push for decentralization, how it does it and what it means for its control foundation and legitimacy.

Lastly, by presenting Cambodia as dominant party politics, this study brings the case country into a more comparable perspective with other SEA countries. In the last few

¹² The date of the event was November 16, 2009

decades, the SEA has become, in Case's words, a 'storehouse' of dominant party politics (Case 2006). Six out of ten countries, Case argues, have experienced electoral authoritarianism – another term for dominant party politics. It started with Singapore in the late 1960s, then Malaysia in the early 1970s, a decade later with Thailand and the Philippines, and then Burma. Historically, moreover, dominant party politics has had a far longer run in SEA than in other parts of the world, suggesting that much can be learned from this region.

This study adds Cambodia in that 'storehouse.' As argued elsewhere, Cambodia has rarely been included systematically in the SEA debates, be they on cultures (Pye 1985; Vatikiotis 1998), legitimacy (Alagappa 1995), the roles of elites (Case 2002), economic development (Rowen 1998), elections (Taylor 1996), or dominant party politics itself (Case 2006). Therefore, bringing Cambodia into the regional literature is a crucial first step to locating Cambodia more explicitly vis-à-vis those countries surrounding it.

1.7. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is arranged in the following order. Chapter 2 analytically reviews the current literature on dominant party politics and derives a set of explanatory factors. These factors are taken to be reflected within the context of a weak state. The key output of the chapter is an analytical framework which is used to guide the whole thesis.

Chapter 3 starts by discussing how the research attempts to use the single- country case study approach, and its pros and cons. It then points out specific areas of CPP dominance that will be researched and from which inferences about the broader dynamics of such party dominance will be made. The last part of the chapter discusses the fieldwork. Operationalizing the framework derived in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 provides a roadmap for the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 provides historical background of the CPP and its rise to power since 1979, focusing first on its formative period, then on the period during which it has adapted to electoral politics. Through the historical discussion, the presence and roles of the opposition are also brought into focus.

Chapter 5, following the detailed questions set out in Chapter 3, presents the empirical findings on three related strategies of the CPP as a dominant party: how it controls state

budget, uses that resource to accommodate and form elite coalitions, and strengthens the local administrative network. In the discussion, the roles of donors whose huge amount of financial aid and roles are used in pushing budgetary reform in Cambodia are also examined. In presenting the rural administrative network of the CPP, the chapter also discusses how the party manages to penetrate and influence rural-decision making.

While part of Chapter 5 discusses the CPP and state budget, Chapters 6 and 7 continue the story, this time focusing on the 'off-budget' transactions carried out by the CPP to build its political image and popular legitimacy. These chapters show how the CPP has developed a shadowy arrangement, attempted to raise funds from its own elite and spends it on rural infrastructure throughout the country. This strategy, although involving much less funding than the formal national budget and annual donor money, has proven rather successful in making the CPP and its leadership look good and appear to further development in the face of rural population. In another word, it is an effective shadowy legitimization strategy employed by the incumbent.

Chapter 8 discusses decentralization, arguing that rather than undermining the CPP's control, it has actually been shaped to fit its interest. Decentralization, first at the commune, and then district and provincial level, has been helpful for the CPP to establish its local legitimacy. Yet, the CPP has been discreet in designing specific aspects of the reform to ensure that the party and the central level still control the sub-national level through various mechanisms.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by consolidating the findings from the previous chapters. First, it places the case of the CPP within the analytical framework proposed in Chapter 2 and from there, seeks to answer the central question of this thesis, i.e. how the CPP has managed to become and stay dominant in Cambodia. It then seeks to make specific conceptual contributions to the wider literature regarding a weak state dominated by a single party. Lastly, it proposes some topics for further research.

Chapter 2: A dominant party in a weak state

This chapter reviews the existing literature, starting with that on dominant party politics, then linking it to budgetary management and reform, popular perception and legitimacy, and inter-governmental relations and decentralization within a weak state. The aim is to learn from the literature answers to the question posed in chapter 1, i.e. how the ruling party in Cambodia managed to stay dominant. This chapter has four main parts:

- First, it briefly discusses key concepts relating to a party's dominance,
- Second, it reviews and derives a set of explanatory factors found to be important for a party to stay in power,
- Third, in sections 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5, it discusses those factors within the context of a weak state. In line with the research questions posted in chapter 1, the discussion focuses on three themes: state budget and its spending, popular legitimacy, and inter-governmental relations and decentralization,
- The chapter finally proposes a derived analytical framework that will guide the whole thesis.

The review makes reference to the cases of countries in SEA and Africa. This is not to suggest that other regions do not experience dominant party politics. Its emphasis on SEA, however, is justified on the grounds of cultural similarities (elitist culture, elite-mass relations, Buddhism, etc) between Cambodia and those regional countries. The African experience, on the other hand, is mentioned because of the recent donor-driven research interest in the region relating to weak states, post-conflict situations, institutional reforms and foreign aid¹³. This study attempts to make use of and find gaps within this large body of existing literature¹⁴.

The existing literature provides evidence that, to be able to stay dominant, a party needs to possess both strong foundational elements of control and adaptive capacity. When put together, control and adaptability help provide a better picture of dominant party

¹³ See for instance <http://www.gsdrc.org/index.cfm?objectid=4D340CFC-14C2-620A-27176CB3C957CE79> to see how popular the topic of fragile state and state building has become within donor community, and how focus it is on Africa.

¹⁴ The attempt is even more relevant for Cambodia, given that donors have also been influential in setting the agenda for governance and development research in this country (see for instance, Adler and Craig (2010))

politics. As the following discussion will show, the current literature, however, tends to focus on specific parts of the puzzle: some on one or two of the foundational elements of control, some on adaptive capacity. The following discussion takes a more holistic approach, trying to put these different pieces together. But before doing that, a brief discussion of some of the key concepts is provided.

2.1. Political party, patronage and state – the concepts

The review starts with the general concept of a political party. In a representative democracy, a political party is an organization seeking to link citizens and politicians by solving two common political problems: a collective action problem and a social choice problem (Aldrich 1995). The first refers to the problems of pooling candidates and their resources together and also to advertising their candidacies under a common brand to the voters. To respond to this problem, a party acts to facilitate a collective action by investing in its administrative and organizational infrastructure. The second refers to the problem of bringing together candidates with similar policy and programmatic preferences. When a party is formed, develops its programmatic coherence, and collectively makes its policy known, voters will know how best their interests will be served if they vote for that party (Aldrich 1995).

Formally, politicians are linked to people through their party's programmatic appeals. The party is accountable to voters in delivering those programs once it is elected (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). This is usually the case in advanced democracies. However, in emerging democracies, the politician-voter linkages usually occur in a more clientelistic manner where a party seeks to provide support to a specific group of voters in exchange for their votes¹⁵ (Kitschelt 2000; Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002). This has a lot to do with the fact that political parties in those countries are rarely ideological or development-programmatic.

Instead, they are more organizational structures whose strength depends on their administrative abilities to mobilize voters (Gunther and Diamond 2003; Carothers 2006; Reilly and Nordlund 2008). The politicians and the parties in such situations, as Scott (1969) and much later on Scheiner (2006) note, had to do two things: (i) finding resources and support to provide to the clientele or specific ethnic groups with the

¹⁵ Actually, such clientelistic link is also noted to be prevalent in the advanced democracy of Japan under the LDP (Scheiner 2006).

expectation of obtaining their supports in return, and (ii) setting up mechanisms to ensure that those receiving favors did vote for the party.

Seeking to gain support, those political parties tend to use patronage networks as a way to finance their clientelist channels. In this study, the terms clientelism, patronage, patron-client, and elite networks are used interchangeably. They all refer to what Brinderhoff and Goldsmith (2002: 2) define as:

A complex chain of personal bonds between political patrons or bosses and their individual clients or followers... the patron furnishes excludable resources (money, jobs) to dependents and accomplices in return for their support and cooperation (votes, attendance at rallies). The patron has disproportionate power and thus enjoys wide latitude about how to distribute the assets under his control

In modern politics, patronage networks might be linked together from a very low level (i.e. the rural level) to the higher patrons – possibly as high as central ministers or the prime minister. Patronage networks in those cases are usually backed up by upward chains of powerful, resourceful patrons who are considered as elites. Elites are defined as the most powerful people in a political system. They can be national or local elites, bureaucratic, business and political elites. Their actual positions can include ministers, key bureaucrats, legislators, business people, senior members of the armed forces, police and intelligence services (Ornert and Hewitt 2006).

In developing countries, patronage and the state are closely linked. Max Weber defined a state as 'a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory... if the state is to exist, the dominated must obey the authority claimed by the powers that be.' (Weber 1966, quoted in Fritz and Menocal 2007: 5). Tilly defines a state as '[a]n organization which controls the population occupying a defined territory is a state in so far as it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; it is autonomous; it is centralized; and its divisions are formally coordinated with one another' (Tilly 1975, quoted in Fritz and Menocal 2007: 11).

According to Weber, a modern state is underpinned by a 'legal-rational' bureaucracy. In that system, public office is de-personalized. There is a strong separation between political and administrative aspects of governance, with politically neutral officials enacting policy "without fear or favor." Authority and accountability in the system is

exercised through a hierarchy of command, control and enforcement according to the set rules (Minogue 2001).

By the 1980s, a new paradigm called New Public Management (NPM) was introduced. NPM especially promotes the use of private sector practices in the public sector in order to enhance efficiency and cut 'government fat.' That implies privatization of service delivery, efficiency reforms, contracting out, restructuring of the civil service, performance-based management and partnership formation with external actors (Minogue 2001).

In developing countries, during the 1980s and 1990s, donors were pushing to downsize the state. However, in the mid 1990s, the state was brought back in as an actor that provides a strong institutional framework for markets and development (Evans et al. 1985). In 1997, the World Bank introduced the notion of the Capable State, arguing for state roles to complement, not replace markets (World Bank 1997). A capable state needs to have three important building blocks. First, a government must build a strong central capacity for formulating, coordinating, and translating policies into strategic outcomes. Second, after policies are formulated and translated into strategies, due processes are needed to transform them into outputs. To do that, effective management and structures, together with strong voices and participation from citizens, are called for. The third block of a capable state refer to the existence of motivated and capable civil servants who are the 'lifeblood' of the system (World Bank 1997).

States in many developing countries today are neither well-structured as expected by Weber, nor managerial in the NPM sense, nor capable enough. Their bureaucracies are loosely defined and poorly enforced. Patrimonialism is common. In some cases, patrimonial practice and rent-seeking become so entrenched and penetrative that the state is defined by some as a 'neo-patrimonial' state, referring to a situation in which:

the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law... relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal politics and administrative system... leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status. The distinction between private and public interests is purposely blurred...In return for material rewards, clients mobilize political support and refer all decisions upwards as a mark of deference to patrons (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994:458).

In this study, a weak state partly refers to a state with weak formal, legal bureaucratic elements¹⁶. The term also implies a state which is severely penetrated by patrimony-based institutions. Thus, the term 'weak state' used in this study is close to the neo-patrimonial state above. However, this study refrains from making the implicit assumption that patrimonialism is always bad and anti-poor. Instead, patrimonialism is deemed here as a key element of forces often employed by a dominant party.

The consequence of a weak state is its inability to meet some very basic needs of the poor such as education, health, security (Roberts 2008; Porter et al. 2010). The study however does not assume that such services can only be provided through formal state institutions alone, although that would be an ideal channel through which public service should be provided.

In discussing a weak state, however, one should not focus only on the government, but also on the people. In a weak state, especially one that has just emerged from conflicts like Cambodia, the people tend to have had bad experiences and hold low expectation about the government. Their ability to hold the state accountable is also weak and fragile (Oosterom 2009). This means that to understand a people, it is important to look at what they have been through historically. And it is not just history, but other cultural factors (e.g. religion, social hierarchy) as well that matter (Vatikiotis 1998). This study attempts to account for these other factors when discussing a country's people and their perceptions and relationship with the state.

2.2. Key factors for explaining a party's dominance

This section will now focus on the literature related to dominant party politics. As indicated in chapter 1, dominant party politics refers to a situation where a political party stays on in power for three decades or more despite regular democratic elections. In such a system, the incumbents play the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections, yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather instruments of democracy (Schedler 2002:3).

¹⁶ It should also be noted that the terms 'developing country' and 'weak state' are used interchangeably in the study.

The term 'dominant party,' however, does not mean the party never loses an election. In some cases, the party did lose the election and power (as in Mexico), in some others, it lost but managed to come back to power (as in Japan, Taiwan and Korea), while some others have never lost at all (as in Singapore and Malaysia) (Friedman and Wong 2008b). The literature on dominant party politics considers all these groups in order to understand *how* the party manages to stay in power. While different studies have focused on different explanatory factors, their findings can be summed up in a broad framework composed of two groups of factors: (i) foundational elements of control; and (ii) adaptive capacity.

The first element of control of a dominant party is its tight control over state apparatus and resources. This is called 'incumbency advantages.' Being in power, the ruling party can seek to politicize public resources, i.e. the state budget, the administrative apparatus and media, allowing them to outspend opposition parties within an electoral politics (Schedler 2002; Green 2009). The second element is the party's ability to form an elite coalition. Ambitious elites see their interest in being with the party, while the party also tries to benefit from the resources and skills that those elites bring in. This creates a mutually beneficial relationship between the party and elite (Brownlee 2007:12).

Forming a coalition of elites is a process that constantly adjusts itself. Therefore, it is important to look into the history of the party, dividing it into two parts: early regime formation, and medium term institutional building and legacies. The emerging years of a party are the formative years, defining its subsequent stability and durability (Brownlee 2007:37). Once formed, the ruling party seeks to expand its power base, bring new elites into the ruling group (Brownlee 2007). In the government, these elites typically control key cabinet posts such as military, finance and industry.

Although in the same party, it is not uncommon to see these elite compete to advance and protect their domains of power (Aldrich 1995:22). In these cases, the role of the party is to adjudicate among these contestants, assuring those who do not get ahead today will still have a chance and thus have incentives to stay on with the party. In addition, the party and its leaders also work to create a sense of collective interest and lead those elites to cooperate on issues that transcend factional advantages (Brownlee 2007).

To keep the party strong, other important elements are needed. A strong and skillful leadership is very important in most dominant parties (Crouch and Morley 1999; Friedman and Wong 2008b). But no matter how smart a leader is, the endurance of the party and its regime depends very much on the third element of control: organizational strength. Comparing the durability of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Malaysia, and the weaker one in the Philippines, Brownlee argues that the difference is that, in the first two cases, the parties are better institutionalized and organized (Brownlee 2007:202-11). Such an organizational foundation, other scholars also agree, helps regulate conflicts among elites, encouraging them to think of not just the immediate but longer term benefits from staying loyal to the party (Scheiner 2006; Grzymala-Busse 2008b; Green 2009).

Another important criterion of an enduring dominant party is the capacity to adapt. Different scholars have approached this question of 'adaptive capacity' differently. Friedman and Wong (2008b) emphasize the party's ability to face and deal with political contingencies and crises; to manage and use the resources at its disposal; to build new images and appeals; and to deal with its internal faction problems. Schedler (2002) similarly equates a party's adaptability to its ability to use various manipulative strategies – a menu of manipulations, he calls it – to ensure its electoral victory and control.

Those strategies, according to Schedler, include re-invention of the party's identity and appeal, expansion of its support base to a new constituency while minimizing losses to the existing ones, improving its internal structure, thinking about leadership succession, promoting (or inhibiting) intra-party democracy (Friedman and Wong 2008b). The party might also resort to using some of the more tricky and repressive strategies such as weakening, intimidating, or restricting opposition parties' freedom to campaign and solicit votes, vote buying, and exerting controls over print and electronic media (Schedler 2002; Schedler 2006).

While the list of strategies provides a better understanding of how a party can stay dominant, this study argues that the listing is not systematic enough and does not tell much on how and why those strategies are used. More importantly, if a dominant party tends to use not one, but a combination of strategies, it is important to understand how they complement or create trade-offs among one another and why.

Schedler (2009) addressed this question of ‘trade-off,’ using a model called the ‘dilemma of manipulation’. He argues that in winning an election, the party manipulation and popular support and legitimacy are substitutes¹⁷. The ruling party, he explains, can use various manipulative strategies as listed earlier, but it needs to be careful not to use them to the point where it might hurt its own legitimacy (Schedler 2009). His argument can be interpreted as meaning that, a skillfully adaptive party is one that knows how best to avoid such point.

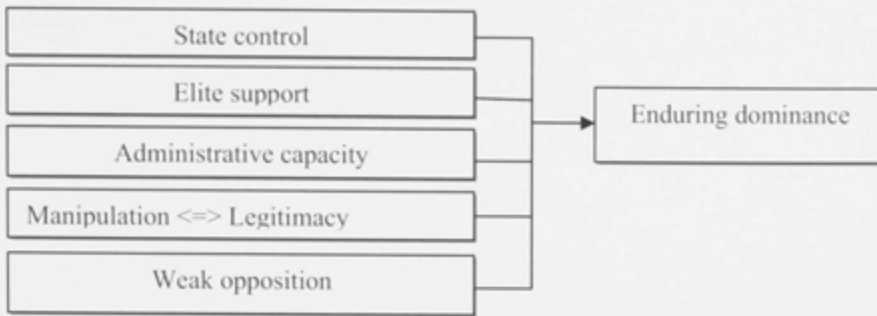
But Schedler’s dilemma of manipulation model includes only two variables (manipulation and popular legitimacy), and not other factors such as state control and elite coalitions. These other factors are already included his ‘menu of manipulations’. But even so, this study still argues that the ‘dilemma of manipulation’ model is too narrow to systematically capture the mechanisms by which the different strategies are chosen and used, how they complement or off-set each other, and why they are chosen and made possible in the first place.

Besides the internal strength and capacity of the ruling party, the weaknesses of the opposition parties also explain the former’s dominance. While an opposition can be weak due to its internal problems (e.g. weak leadership, internal factions), it can also be weak because the ruling party intends to keep it weak. As will be discussed in more detail later, the incumbency advantages of the ruling party also imply the opposition’s lack of access to state resources (both finance and administration), which in turn prevents it from effectively forming elite coalitions, building the party’s administration, and winning the voters’ trust (Rakner and van de Walle 2009)

To sum up, a number of key variables help explain a party’s enduring dominance. They are: (i) the party’s control over the state; (ii) its ability to form and gain support from elite and patronage networks; (iii) its administrative network; (iv) its adaptive capacity, and (v) a weak opposition. On the adaptive capacity, the literature seems to focus on the ability of the incumbent to balance manipulation and legitimacy. So, ‘Manipulation<=>legitimacy’ (the <=> sign indicates ‘balancing’) is used in place of ‘adaptive capacity’ in Figure 2 below.

¹⁷ Legitimacy here means the right to rule (more discussion on legitimacy will be presented later)

Figure 2: Key factors for explaining a party's dominance



The literature, and the set of explaining factors derived from it, however, is not systematic enough in the ways it captures the dynamics of a party's dominance. For one thing, it neither captures the relationships between the different elements, nor explains the underlying dynamic that triggers those relationships. For the purpose of this study, furthermore, the set of factors still needs contextualization in the case of a weak state.

In the next section, this study takes another step by bringing the discussion about a weak state and reflecting it through each of the factors above. To link back to the questions posed in Chapter 1, it will frame the discussion in three areas: (i) state budgetary management and reform, (ii) people's perceptions and legitimacy questions, and (iii) managing inter-governmental relations, i.e. centralization versus decentralization.

2.3. Controlling the state budget and sustaining elite coalition

In controlling the state, a dominant party seeks to control the state's resources and budget (Brownlee 2007). Budgetary control gives the incumbent comparative fiscal advantages compared to the opposition (Green 2009). A ruling party, Green argues, can capture the state resources by diverting funds from state-owned enterprises, creating and distributing state jobs through party patronage, demanding kick-backs from business people, and using the state's apparatus and employees for its campaign, voter mobilization and surveillance (Green 2009).

The state resource capture by the ruling party was found to exist in both developed (such as in Japan (Scheiner 2006)) and developing countries (as in many African countries (Rakner and van de Walle 2009)). This study focuses on the latter group of countries. In line with the existing literature, this study argues that to understand how a

ruling party captures state resources in a weak state, first, it is important to understand what a budgeting system in such a state is like.

Ideally, a government needs to put in place a reliable institutional set-up to ensure that revenues are properly collected, then transparently and effectively spent to finance basic services for the people (World Bank 1998). In reality, though, many developing countries do not have the required institutional capacity to manage their own budgets. Consequently, they tend to have low collected revenue, irrational allocation of resources, and rampant corruption associated with budget management (IMF 2004a; Allen 2009).

Usually, in a weak state, the government's revenue tends to come from a small tax base and tax administration is weak (Moore 2004). This however does not mean a weak state does not extract resources from the society. Actually, it does, probably even more than a tax can impose. Extraction in this context takes the form of rent-seeking, natural resource exploitation, abuse of regulatory power, and demanding kick-backs from business. The problem is that the revenue does not come straight into the national budget but individual pockets or a 'secret box' reserved for special interest or political purposes, and their transactions are usually non-transparent to outsiders (Dorotinsky and Floyd 2004).

A weak state usually experiences various budgetary reforms, many of which are driven by donors (Schiavo-Campo and Tommasi 1999; Schiavo-Campo 2007). Experience, however, shows that donor-driven reforms have been slow; some say this is because there are simply too many things to reform (IMF 2004a), while others put the blame on politicians in those countries for accepting the reform only to ensure legitimacy and external support, and not to increase the fiscal efficiency of the state (Levitsky and Way 2006; Andrews 2009). These more pessimistic views suggest that, while some ruling regimes appear to reform their budgetary systems, those reforms are only on the surface, allowing the real patronage-based practices to influence how national resources are actually allocated and spent (Rakner et al 2004).

This donor-driven literature tends to view state budget management in a weak state as either being in line with their ideal path of budgetary reform (see for instance Schiavo-Campo and Tommasi 1999) or as misuse of public funds, i.e. corruption. This

perspective, this study argues, is too normative and provides only limited insight into the strategic intentions of politicians, those in a dominant party included.

On this point, Goetz (2009) and Robinson (2009), provides a different perspective. They argue that reforms (budgetary reform included) needs to be understood in term of their impact on the existing patronage interest and legitimacy of a ruling party. They argue further that a reform, while might go against patronage interest, is still possible if it helps prevent legitimacy erosion of the ruling party. This argument implies that, for considerate politicians, reform is not so much about right or wrong, but a balancing act to weigh the pros and cons of losing patronage support on the one hand, and popular support on the other.

However, the record shows that budgetary systems and reforms in many African authoritarian regimes, for instance, have been consistently weak and slow (Andrews 2009; Rakner and van de Walle 2009). A question arises: with a weak state budgetary system, how can those regimes meet the demands of the people and build their own legitimacy? According to the literature, a broad answer to this question is those regimes do not depend only on their on-budget but also on various forms of off-budget spending to satisfy (or at least appear to satisfy) their people's demand.

One example of such off-budget support is from Ghana. In that country, in the absence of central funding from the state, Members of Parliament (MPs) have resorted to extracting resources from other sources to finance their campaigns, and to sustain their patronage networks by, for instance, paying individuals' school fees, electricity and water bills, funerals, and wedding expenses, and the distribution of various types of hand-outs. These, it is noted, are not just one-off vote-buying, but institutionalized behavior, seen as an act of taking of care of the people (Lindberg 2003).

On a related subject, van de Walle (2007) observes that, to win votes, ruling parties in Africa have used their patronage in ways that account for the voters' preferences, thus becoming more mass-responsive. This change is in contrast to a pure predatory state where interests of only a small group of elite are taken of. Becoming more mass-responsive, he continues, entails certain fiscal and redistributive implications. First, it becomes more expensive to address the needs of a wider group of people. This might

mean more resources have to be extracted either from economic development or natural resource exploitation (van de Walle 2007).

Second, it is not just more resources that are needed, but also a different way to re-distribute them. The personal and informal relations of a traditional patronage network would not be adequate for such re-distribution. For this purpose, the party structure itself can be used to re-distribute resources to voters. This re-distribution however is not done through formal taxation and public spending – that is, it is off-budget. Moreover, the off-budget re-distribution is done only to the extent and in ways that will attract votes.

While his notion about redistributive roles of the patronage is plausible, van de Walle (2007), however, does not say much on *how* those re-distributions are usually done, e.g. in what ways, at what scales, their timing and sustainability and trends over time. These specific questions need answer. For instance, it is useful to know whether such re-distribution is limited only to direct vote-buying during election time, or how widely or discriminatingly such re-distribution is in term of its targeting. Understanding all these details, this study argues, will provide insights into the changing nature of the patronage itself.

Another question arising from van de Walle's (2007) findings is, does patronage-based re-distribution constitute a more legitimate state? And because the re-distribution is not done through the normal state budget, does off-budget support bring more legitimacy to the ruling party and the elite, and does it further weaken state budgetary system? Or does it not make any difference at all in the real world, given that the close relationship between state, party and elite is very common in dominant party politics?

Another factor that should not be overlooked when addressing budgetary concerns in developing countries is aid dependency¹⁸. Donors obviously provide a big pool of money, which can become the target for rent-seeking and exploitation by politicians and patronage. For instance, when aid is tied to specific projects, this in effect becomes political resources, either in terms of new jobs to be given away, and/or new money to be distributed (Bräutigam 2000). Besides, a ruling party can also take political credit

¹⁸ This is particularly relevant to the case of Cambodia, where 40% of the total budget (about 75% of its development budget) comes from foreign aid (Pak and Craig 2008).

from donor projects by being present at ribbon-cutting ceremonies, giving the impression they are the ones who brought the projects to the people (Bräutigam 2000).

To sum up, existing literature indicates that a dominant party in a weak state seeks control over the state budget which is generally poorly managed, and slowly reformed. But despite the weak formal budget, the ruling party can still seek popular support and votes by resorting to using off-budget re-distributive channels. The literature however offers little insight into the mechanisms by which all these are operationalized, i.e. how the ruling party manages the state budget to accommodate patronage interest, how specifically it affects budgetary reform, how the off-budget support funded and distributed, and whether it helps build state legitimacy. This study will seek answers for these questions using the case of Cambodia.

2.4. Popular perception and the question of legitimacy

Legitimacy is important because, as the literature makes clear, a dominant party needs to gain a certain amount of legitimacy to balance its control. Actually, legitimacy is central to authority and ruling (Weber 1966, quoted in Alagappa 1995:1). In other words, authority can only exist when the ruler ‘possesses an acknowledged right to command’ and the ruled have ‘an acknowledged obligation to obey.’ (Alagappa 1995:1). Such rights to rule are the bases of legitimacy.

Dominant parties tend to manipulate elections for their political interests and, in this way, they expect to obtain at least a semblance of the democratic legitimacy needed to satisfy both external and domestic actors (Schedler 2002). But if electoral victory is delivered through manipulation, what kind of legitimacy is it that is being delivered? Two related points are pertinent here. One, legitimacy as a value is subjective and depends on people’s perceptions. Two, electoral legitimacy is not the only claim that a dominant party uses to justify its long reign; another type of legitimacy known as performance legitimacy (Alagappa 1995) is also very relevant.

In SEA, the dominant parties, in addition to manipulating elections (Case 2005), have worked to build their performance legitimacy by ensuring political stability, security and the development of their countries. President Suharto’s New Order, for instance, ruled Indonesia from 1966 to 1998 based on this ‘development-based’ legitimacy. Many Indonesians, while aware of electoral manipulations used by the regime at the

time, were living quite comfortably with that knowledge, according the regime its legitimacy for its developmental achievements (Liddle 1996). This importance of 'development' in legitimization is also noticed in other SEA countries including Malaysia, Thailand, and socialist Vietnam (Kingsbury 2005).

But it is dangerously misleading to assume that the incumbents' seeking to establish legitimacy would tend to deliver development and prosperity. Many ruling parties in Africa have manipulated elections (Rakner and van de Walle 2009), have been elected, but failed to develop their country's economy, leaving millions of their people in poverty. So, while people in SEA vote to endorse a regime's ruling to achieve security and economic prosperity (Rowen 1998), people in some African countries vote for the incumbent governments because they have no choice, and see the voting as the only chance to solicit material rewards to meet their confronting needs (Manzetti and Wilson 2007).

The difference between the SEA and African examples raises more questions about what legitimacy means. The literature suggests that, to understand legitimacy, one also needs to understand people's perceptions and their expectations about the state. Such perceptions are shaped by historical and certain cultural contexts that a population has gone through. For a post-conflict context (as in Cambodia), people tend to feel powerless, marginalized and humiliated. In such cases, compliance and even support of the status quo is a common coping strategy (Oosterom 2009). Cultural values such as hierarchy and benevolence are also key factors shaping people's perceptions about the state (Rowen 1998; Vatikiotis 1998; Case 2002).

Besides people's perceptions about the state, another relevant concept is symbolic uses in politics (Geertz 1980; Edelman 1985; Brysk 1995). These scholars argue that people are not always rational in perceiving what they have and have not received from the state. Instead, their perception is shaped by symbols and interpretative meanings that they derive about the state.

For instance, Geertz found petty states in Bali (called *Negara*) to be like theatre states governed by rituals and symbols played out through various ceremonial events to send messages and gain legitimacy from the people (Geertz 1980). Geertz's argument points to the importance of culture and its symbolic significance. Other Asian scholars later on

emphasized this symbolic aspect, arguing that for many SEA people, the state carries the symbol of a father, of the beholders of religious values, and of benevolence (Pye 1985; Vatikiotis 1998).

Given the importance of symbols in politics, politicians, including those in a dominant party systems, seek to maintain social orders and legitimacy through the projection of symbols from the top down (Brysk 1995). But unlike the rulers in the 19th century *Negaras* in Bali, modern politicians do not just use ceremonies but also the media to manage flow of news and political information to the mass, emphasizing the good things about their regimes, and bad things about the opposition (Schedler 2002). The effect of this 'mouthpiece' strategy, it was found, tends to be greater among populations that are moderately knowledgeable about politics, i.e. those who pay enough attention to be heavily exposed to the government line, but who are not sophisticated enough to be able to resist it (Geddes and Zaller 1989).

In addition to the media, the ruling party also relies on its administrative networks at the local level to exercise voter mobilization and surveillance. Because it tightly controls the state, the ruling party tends to use the state administrative apparatus for its own political purposes. In Ghana for instance, the ruling party used local police, the military and bureaucrats to mobilize people to vote for them (Lindberg 2003). Similar practices were also found in Indonesia during Suharto period and in Singapore (Sidel 2005; Grzymala-Busse 2008a).

The use of state administration for political control is more common in former Communist countries in Eastern Europe. In Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary, for instance, the former Communist parties that had controlled the state during the communist era, have managed to strengthen themselves along with the expansion of the state administration itself. By doing that, they practically intertwine their own party structure building with state building. Thus, expansion of the state bureaucracy since 1990 was also of advantage to the parties (O'Dwyer 2004).

People's perceptions are shaped and their voices made heard by their ability to group together and form themselves into a strong civil society (Diamond 1999). However, especially in a post-conflict context, the word civil society is often used to mean NGOs who are funded and accountable mainly to donors, and/or small community-based

organizations (CBOs) which are still too weak to make their voice heard and be acted upon by the state (Oosterom 2009).

Opposition parties also seek to shape and influence people's perceptions in their favors. However, in many developing countries dominated by a single party, voters still do not see the opposition as a good alternative. These opposition parties tend to be weak and less capable to gain trust from the people (Rakner and van de Walle 2009). Such weakness comes from their lack of access to the state resource and vulnerability to the buying-off, divide-and-rule and other strategies deployed by the incumbent party (Green 2009; Schedler 2009).

To sum up, people's perceptions and expectation about the state need to be understood within the country's wider historical, cultural and social context. However, the ruling party also seeks to shape and control such perceptions by various means including its administrative and surveillance networks and the media which the party can partly do by using the state administration system. Of course, these factors and strategies vary by countries. So, this study will look at the case of Cambodia and the CPP.

2.5. Inter-governmental relations and decentralization

Managing inter-government relations (i.e. between the centre and the periphery) is a key dimension of a state control (Hutchcroft 2001). This study looks at such relations because they are crucial to a party's dominance and yet have not been much discussed in the literature. Decentralization, moreover, is central to that relations, and therefore should be examined (Smith 1985; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007).

Generally, there are two main types of decentralization: political and administrative. Political decentralization occurs when power and functions are transferred from central to local government. With decentralization, local government is based on political representation, in which councilors are locally elected representatives of the people who live in the area of territorial jurisdiction of the local government (Manor 2003).

Administrative decentralization, also known as "de-concentration", refers to delegation of tasks and transfer of authority from central government to sub-national governments which are the branches of the central government (Cohen and Peterson 1999). De-concentration happens in forms of central ministries transferring roles and authorities to

their respective sub-national departments. In this sense, the sub-national agencies are not locally representative institutions, i.e. not elected by the people but employed by sectoral ministries. De-concentration may allow locally placed state officials to make decisions over service delivery, and these officials may also create important links between local and central government (Cohen and Peterson 1999).

Different levels of sub-national administrations can be put through decentralization, depending on the objectives of the reforms. In Uganda, for instance, the reform in 1980s started with a local election at the lowest tier. That was partly done as a political solution to post-conflict nature of the country and partly as a way to consolidate power of the ruling party at the time (Ndegwa and Levy 2003). In Vietnam, however, the Communist Party has paid more attention on the de-concentration part, especially on the provincial level and district levels. Only recently that political element was introduced to the reform at the commune and village level. The focus on these middle levels (i.e. provincial and district levels) in Vietnam aimed more at improving administrative effectiveness and less on political reforms (Martinez-Vazquez 2004).

Decentralization is relevant here not only because it is a common type of reform worldwide, but also because, by nature, it can have direct impacts on the two central elements of a party's dominance: legitimacy and control. The literature claims that decentralization can help build legitimacy of the state in two ways: first, it helps build 'output legitimacy' which is fostered by government outputs in service provision, small scale projects and local development processes; second, it promotes 'input legitimacy' which is fostered by the shared ideas, values and participation that the people hold about what government should look like and consent to live by the rules set by governing institutions (Brinkerhoff and Johnson 2009; Oosterom 2009). Building on this expectation, decentralization can bring about both local development and local democracy.

Given the democratizing effect of decentralization, it is reasonable to expect that an authoritarian regime/ dominant party would rationally oppose the reform. On the contrary, though, there are various cases where authoritarian regimes have pushed for decentralization. One of the main reasons is because decentralization in most cases is advocated by international donors. With that pressure, a dominant party regime that relies on donor support tends to undertake the reform as an exchange for foreign aid

and by extension, a secure international legitimacy especially among donors from the West (Levitsky and Way 2006; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007).

Besides international legitimacy, there are other reasons why an incumbent government would agree to decentralize: with the reform, while some powers are taken away, the central governments are also more able in establishing their legitimacy and open up new ways of control. Uganda is one of such cases (Ndegwa and Levy 2003). Other authoritarian regimes even push for decentralization (especially administrative decentralization) so that they can use sub-national governments as a vehicle to carry out the central government's development plan, as in Vietnam (Martinez-Vazquez 2004).

Political parties play important roles in decentralization (Manor 1999). The current debates about politics of decentralization, however, does not give much attention to the roles of this particularly important actor (see for instance Eaton et al. 2009). What is already known on this point are some broad indications which are discussed as follows. First, it is indicated that decentralization can be attractive to both the ruling and the opposition parties. For the opposition, participating in sub-national elections can strengthen their party organizations at the local level (Manor 1999:74-76).

But experience also shows that even ruling parties can benefit from decentralization. In Cote d'Ivoire, for instance, decentralization first helped enhance the legitimacy of the ruling regimes by creating some modest openings for local sentiment and small opportunities for aspiring but frustrated political activities at the lower level. On top of that, decentralization has also helped the incumbent to further strengthen its organizational capacity by using the electoral process to purge undesirable personnel and party members (Faure 1989:71).

While decentralization is good for legitimization, if not well managed, it can destabilize the ruling regime as already happened in Poland and Slovakia. In these two countries, the former Communist parties intended to design organizational changes to build broader support through decentralization. The strategy did not work and, instead, led to the over-empowering of regional leaders who demanded more and more. The result was rampant corruption and tensions within the parties (Grzymala-Busse 2008a).

This fear of instability explains why the Communist Party in Vietnam has been so careful, striking a balance between 'letting go' and 'keeping control' in its

decentralization process. Despite various decentralization initiatives, Vietnam is still a centralized state in the sense that the national government still control the budget and personnel decisions (especially for appointments and dismissals) of the sub-national governments (Martinez-Vazquez 2004).

Vietnam is also centralized because the Communist Party, a powerful parallel system to the state from the central to the grassroots, is actually very influential amidst this decentralized system. At the provincial level, to which more power has been transferred, the real power has been said to belong to the party apparatus. The party reviews any decisions before they can be implemented by these different levels of government (Dinh 2003).

As well as through state and party control, the central government and elites can also keep the sub-national and local levels in check by using the more patronage-based networks. In Indonesia under Suharto from 1966 until 1998, for instance, the central government, while giving more power to the military to eclipse the role of the regional and local parliaments, sought to ensure that these individuals are not independent but acted as their line of patronage command (Sidel 2005).

In sum, the current literature points out the importance and relevance of inter-government relations and decentralization in state control. It however offers only anecdotal and indicative evidence on how such relations might strengthen or weaken a ruling party's dominance. The literature seems to suggest that to understand such effects, one needs to see decentralization as both a legitimization and a control mechanism which the party can choose to deploy. How the party actually uses it is of course contextual, and this study is curious to learn about this particular issue within the case of Cambodia's decentralization reform and the CPP.

The current literature, it is noted, rarely refer to the roles of political parties when discussing decentralization (see for instance Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Bahl 2009). In dominant party politics, however, ignoring the role of the party would mean taking out a big actor from the picture.

2.6. A derived framework: Party domination as a system

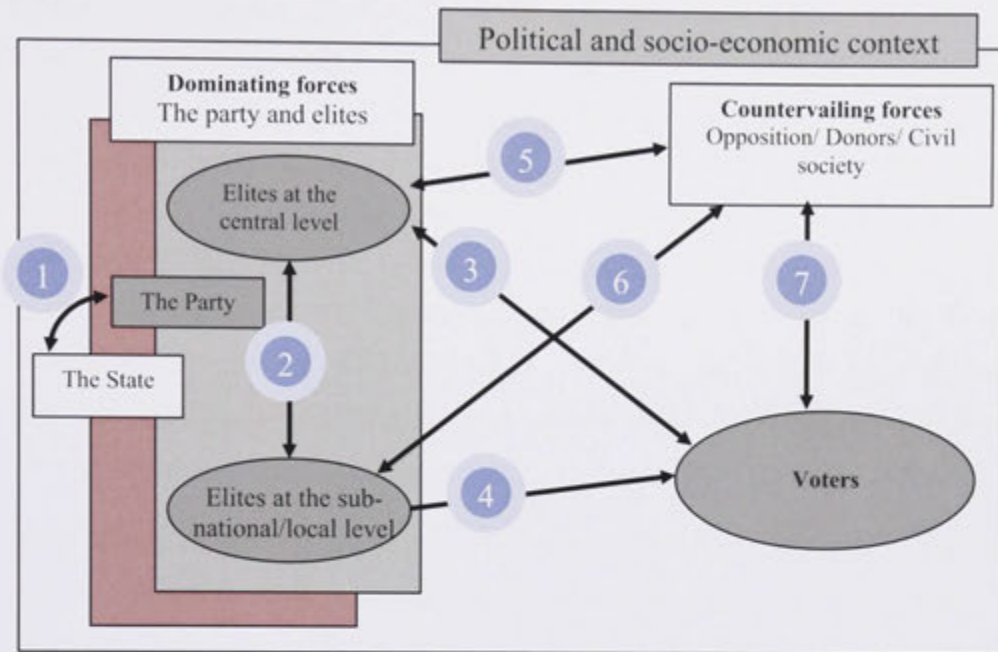
After briefly discussing some key concepts, this chapter has carried out two tasks: (i) it derives a set of key factors useful in understanding a party's dominance; and (ii) it discusses those factors in the context of a weak state, focusing on three important areas, namely: budgetary management, legitimacy and inter-governmental relations and decentralization. From these two tasks, this section takes the discussion further by deriving an analytical framework which will guide for the rest of the thesis.

As indicated in Figure 2, various factors have been identified as important for a party's enduring dominance. However, a number of gaps are argued to exist in the literature. First, it seems to emphasize one or two of those factors. For instance, Brownlee (2007) emphasizes the importance of elite coalition, Scheiner (2006) and Green (2009) the incumbency advantages that come from the party's control over the state apparatus and its resources, and Alagappa (1995) on the importance of legitimacy of the party's ruling. Such a narrow focus, while helpful for in-depth analysis, runs the risk of losing sight of the bigger picture and the broader dynamics of a party's domination.

Attempting to derive an alternative analytical framework, I argue that to understand dominant party politics, it is important to see it as a system. By that, I mean one needs to identify the different key actors involved, how they interact among themselves, and the changing context within which such interactions take place. The strengths and weaknesses of the actors shape their relationships and the contexts in which they operate, and vice versa. For a dominant party, the study argues, its very adaptive capacity reflects directly how well it manages those relationships and its surrounding context.

To further my argument, I propose a diagram in Figure 3 below. Unlike Figure 2 which is a listing of what could be the key explanatory factors for a party's enduring dominance, the diagram in Figure 3 depicts a party's domination as a system. That system includes key actors (grouped into dominating forces, countervailing forces and voters) operating within dominant party politics and their various relationships (i.e. relation 1 through 7). In addition, following Easton (1990: 118-33) about a political system analysis, the study does not just seek to identify different actors and their interactions, but also to examine the dynamics of such interactions and the results and changes that they generate.

Figure 3: Party domination as a system



The dominating forces, depicted on the left hand side, include the dominant party, the elites, the state, and relationships among them (see sections 2.2 and 2.3). The party here refers mainly to its ‘administrative networks’ which exist alongside those of the state. Reflecting the usually close relations among the party, the state, and the elite/patronage (which is seen here as the ‘foundational elements of control’ of a dominant party), the diagram makes no explicit distinction among elites, government officials and party officials. However, reflecting the importance of inter-government relations (section 2.5), the diagram distinguishes between elites at the central level from those at the sub-national and local level and suggests that relations between the two (Relationship 2) be studied.

On the right hand side, the diagram shows what is grouped as ‘countervailing forces.’ The current literature usually focuses on the opposition as a key actor in this group. However, in the case of a weak state, donors and civil societies should also be included. Another actor on the right-side is the voters. As discussed in section 2.4, a party can stay dominant partly because of its popular legitimacy which relates directly to voters’ perceptions and expectations of the state. The framework suggests these countervailing forces/actors and voters themselves need to be understood, along with, of course, their interactions with the dominating forces.

The relations between the dominating and countervailing forces occur at both the central and sub-national/local levels. At the central level (Relationship 5), a dominant party not only seeks control over the state and form elite coalitions, but also uses manipulative strategies to weaken the oppositions both by denying them access to the state, and interfering in their internal affairs (see sections 2.2 and 2.3). But as Schedler (2009) argues, such manipulation can be used only to a point where legitimacy of the incumbent is not undermined. Donors and civil societies sometimes can be of help to the dominant party (e.g. they provide financial aid and international legitimacy), but at other times, their interests diverge and present challenges to the party (e.g. the donors and civil societies put pressure on the ruling regime to reform the state and respect human rights).

With decentralization being a popular reform (see section 2.5), the party, and the state and elite that it controls, also interacts with the countervailing forces at sub-national and local level (Relationship 4). While possibly allowing the ruling party to extend its control down to local level, decentralization also represents a new opportunity for the opposition, donors and civil societies to establish and expand their presence and have more direct contact with voters (Relationship 7). For the dominant party, this means that it needs to have a separate set of strategies to deal with these countervailing forces, not just at the central but also at sub-national/local level.

In a democratic system, even a hybrid one, the ruling parties interact with voters from whom they expect their votes, and by extension, popular legitimacy. As sections 2.4 and 2.5 indicate, a ruling party needs to establish legitimacy not only for its central ruling but also at the local level. At the same time, the party, through the state it controls, needs to deliver services and meet the demands of the voters (Relationship 4). Of course, this is the case of an ideal responsive government. But as section 2.3 suggests, when the state is weak, the party might use patronage-based redistributive channels to provide support to voters and thus gain their support. It is also possible that the party wishes to use its sub-national and local administration as medium for better service deliver to voters in exchange for their support (see section 2.5).

As discussed in section 2.4, gaining popular legitimacy might also involve the incumbent using manipulative, or even oppressive, measures such as control of the media, direct vote buying, surveillance and intimidation. These measures, together with

the incumbency advantages enjoyed by the ruling party, present a set of serious challenges for the opposition to reach and gain support from voters (Relationship 7). The way in which an opposition deals with this challenge is also a reflection of its own adaptive capacity or lack thereof.

The framework suggests that these actors and their relationships constitute a system of party domination. The framework also suggests that one way to assess a dominant party's adaptive capacity (which is a key factor for its dominance) is by assessing how well it has managed the state, the elite, and other actors, and more importantly, how well it has managed the ever-changing relationships among them. These relationships, the framework further implies, do not operate separately but in ways that create synergies and/or tradeoffs. How well a party manages to find the right balance to maximize the synergies and optimize the tradeoffs is a reflection of its adaptability. This study uses the framework to guide its inquiries about dominant party politics in Cambodia. The next chapter will discuss the approach further and show how the framework is operationalized in the context of this study.

Chapter 3: Research design and field data collection

This chapter discusses research design and the methods that the study uses to apply the framework on ‘Party domination as a system’ to the case of Cambodia. The research design has three main parts to it.

- First, in examining the way the CPP has managed to stay in power, this study uses a single country study approach, with a comparative perspective. The first section will discuss the pros and cons of this approach.
- Second, this study examines the CPP’s dominance by looking into the four early observations (see section 1.3), namely, budgetary management, rural administration, off-budget spending and decentralization. Section 2 will discuss these points, and
- Third, the study conducted an extensive fieldwork to obtain new pieces of empirical data to support its arguments. The details of the fieldwork are discussed in section 3.

3.1. A single-country study with a comparative perspective

In doing comparative studies, a researcher can choose to compare many cases, few cases, or even a single case country. Each method has strengths and weaknesses and choosing one over another is a function of the particular research questions, the time and resources of the researcher, and the method with which the researcher feels most comfortable (King et al. 1994; Landman 2008).

When comparing many countries, it is most suitable to use quantitative methods of analysis of the aggregate data collected for those countries (Lijphart 1971). The strengths of this method come from its ability to use statistical controls to rule out rival explanations and control for confounding factors, the broadness of its coverage, all of which contribute to its inference and generalization ability. The availability of data on many countries is, however, often the biggest challenge for those attempting such a comparison. Plus, some see this method as not particularly promising when trying to capture and explain complex causal mechanisms, historical processes, and the contextual specificity of a political phenomenon (Landman 2008).

Comparing few countries (from two to fewer than 20 countries), on the other hand, involves intentional selection of the cases. Unless there is a clear rationale as to why certain cases are selected, such a study can produce incorrect inferences (Lijphart 1975). This kind of study, however, is better at capturing the multi-causalities embedded in an observed phenomenon. It is said to be 'case-oriented' in the sense that it takes a country as the unit of analysis and its attention is often focused on the similarities and differences between or among the selected cases (Landman 2008).

The last method, which this study adopts, is a single-country study. A single-country study is considered comparative, Landman (2008: 28) argues, 'if it uses concepts that are applicable to other countries, and/or seeks to make larger inferences that stretches beyond the original country used in the study'. An inherent limitation of a single-country study is that any inference drawn from it is less generalizeable, consequently, carries less weight in the world of publishing agencies and dominant journals (Lees 2006).

However, as other research design scholars (for instance King et al. 1994; Gerring 2007; Landman 2008) argue, some prominent single country studies have made considerable contributions to the field of comparative politics. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to examine intensively a political phenomenon. While less able in measuring and estimating causal effects, a single case approach is more promising when it comes to capturing the causal mechanisms, i.e. *how and why* a relationship takes place (Gerring 2007). Therefore, a case study is a good choice when the researcher is interested in documenting and explaining the dynamics of a process or the manner in which a phenomenon has emerged and evolved over time.

Based on the above argument, this study justifies its using a single country case arguing that such approach is appropriate because this study does not intend to test hypotheses but seeks to explore and explain the *causal mechanisms* of how the CPP has managed to stay in power. The most obvious limitation of this study is the lack of representativeness; however, even then, the study attempts to maximize its ability to make inferences to the broader literature by adopting a comparative perspective in going about explaining the case of Cambodia.

3.2. Key aspects of the CPP's dominance to be researched

There are different aspects of party's dominance that a study can look into. For instance, it can focus on the way it seeks to dominate business activities within the economy, how to handle and co-opt the military, how to control the state, etc. This study however, focuses on the four areas as observed at the start, namely, state budget control, off budget spending, administrative control and decentralization reform. These areas of focus, in addition to limiting the study to a manageable scope, are argued to give insights into different aspects of the CPP dominance. In the following, each of these areas is discussed as to why they are relevant and what kind of questions should be asked about them.

Key aspect 1: The CPP's management of state budget and patronage interest: From the literature discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3), it is clear that a dominant party needs to control state resources and uses it to accommodate elite/patronage in exchange for their support. In the case of a weak state, the ruling party also needs to face the fact that a large share of the state budget comes from donor support, and that it has to reform the budgetary system, partly as a condition of foreign aid. So, the questions to be asked of Cambodia in this context are:

- How has the CPP managed budget and budgetary reform?
- How has the CPP managed to use state budget control to accommodate elite interest in exchange for their support?

Key aspect 2: The CPP's local administration and rural voters' perception: Literature discussion in Chapter 2 (section 2.4) indicates that a dominant party cannot rely on state control and elite coalition alone; it also needs to win popular support and build its own legitimacy. People's perceptions, the discussion shows, are a key factor shaping the kind of legitimacy being valued. The perceptions are in turn shaped by specific historical and cultural factors. In addition, a dominant party, as one of its main strategies, seeks to influence these perceptions either through both its surveillance administrative network and the media. In Cambodia, most voters, in both national and local elections, reside in the rural area. So, it is interesting to ask further questions:

- How has the CPP built its administrative capacity, especially in the rural areas?
and

- How has the party sought to shape rural people's perceptions and win rural votes?

The questions about the CPP controlling the state, patronage, and rural voters are all addressed in Chapter 5. Opposition parties are also addressed in the discussion.

Key aspect 3: The CPP and off-budget supports for rural infrastructure projects:

A key question about a dominant party in a weak state is that: if the state budget is so weak and unable to meet popular demand, how can the rulers establish their own legitimacy besides being elected? Experience from some African countries has shown that the party can use the same elite network that it allows to seek rents from the state to respond to some of the popular needs, and in that way, establish its legitimacy. Based on this study's early observations, the case of Cambodia provides particularly interesting answers to this question. While the state budget is still too small to meet many of the people's needs (chapter 5 will show this), it was observed that the CPP has been vigorously trying to use its own off-budget spending mechanism to meet especially the needs for rural infrastructure. So the questions that this study will ask are:

- How has the off-budget party support been arranged and given by the CPP?
- What more can we learn about the CPP from the off-budget support, especially in term of its relation with the state, the elite/patronage? and
- What have the people perceived about the off-budget support and what it means for the CPP's legitimization effort?

These questions will be addressed empirically in chapters 6 and 7. The findings will be based on the original empirical data collected for this study. These two chapters complement previous chapters in the sense that they zoom in from the bigger picture already presented, to focus on the specific mechanisms which the CPP has used to manage elite and patronage, and legitimizes itself in the eyes of the voters. They also represent the new contribution of this study in term of its empirical findings.

Key aspect 4: The CPP's management of inter-governmental relations and decentralization: Decentralization, the literature review has shown (in chapter 2, section 2.5), can be used both to advance local democracy or to further strengthen a ruling party. This lies in the reform's potential for local legitimization. However, the

ruling party can still ensure central control while decentralizing. To deepen its knowledge about the CPP, the study plans to answer in chapter 8 the following questions about decentralization in Cambodia:

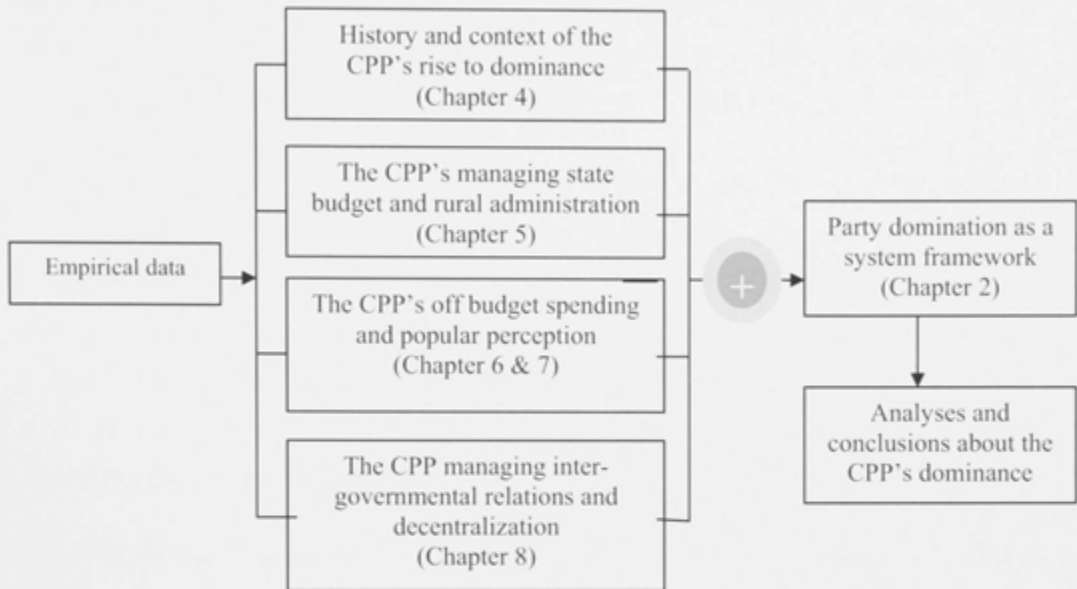
- What have been the CPP strategies toward decentralization? and
- How have local legitimization and central control been applied through those political strategies?

Any discussion about these four areas, however, must be carried out within broader historical context. Therefore, before focusing on the specific areas, the history of the CPP's rise to power since 1979 will be laid out. In that, the historical roots and evolution by which a dominant party has mobilized and maintained elite coalitions, the way it came to control the state, strengthen its administrative structures and how it has managed its relationship with the masses will be presented. That means asking some specific questions about the CPP's past, as follows:

- How was the CPP formed and organized?
- From historical discussion, what can we learn about the party's relationship with the state, patronage and the people?
- What has the broader political and economic situation been evolving under the CPP's rule?

These questions about the history, together with political, social and economical changes will be addressed first in chapter 4 in order to lay out the context in which the subsequent chapters will be placed.

Figure 4: The logic of the study's research design



3.3. Fieldwork

The fieldwork undertaken for this study lasted from April 2008 to January 2009. Because this study is interested in both the CPP and its relationship to the weak state of Cambodia, the fieldwork was designed to focus on both, i.e. on the party and on the state. Therefore, it was seeking to collect information about (i) the CPP's administrative structure and off-budget support for rural infrastructure, (ii) the government's budgetary management and decentralization reform, (iii) people's perceptions about the party and its support, and (iv) other contextual information needed to better understand the CPP's dominance.

My fieldwork adopted a number of data collection methods, including: (i) secondary data collection, (ii) key informant interviews at central level, (iii) key informant interviews at sub-national levels, (iv) a survey with local people, (v) media observations, and (vi) direct involvement in the policy process. This study tried to use, cross-check and complement the different pieces of information collected from these different sources.

Being a Cambodian, I was able to interact directly with my key informants, most of whom are Cambodians, in our mother tongue, Khmer. Having worked as a researcher

about Cambodia's governance and public sector reform since 2003, I was familiar with the particular cultural sensitivities associated with fieldwork and interviews. This allowed me to dig deeper into certain questions or issues, while staying alert and respectful of the respondents' concerns and of my own personal safety.

My previous experience as a researcher in Cambodia provided me with another indispensable advantage: my networks with important key informants. My fieldwork involved talking to people about certain less-known issues regarding the operation of the CPP. Therefore, a certain amount of trust needed to be in place, and my previous networks that included these people allowed me to establish such trust with them. This trust also came with responsibilities on my side to ensure that I keep strict confidentiality of their identities.

While in my field notes I keep records of all the names of the key respondents, along with the date, place and content of my interviews with them, no names have been or will be revealed in my writing or any related published documents. I reveal the dates of my interviews, and sometimes, the places and official titles of my key informants. I, however, took strict precautions not to allow such revelations to be used to uncover my informants' identities.

3.3.1. Secondary data collection and interviews at the central level

In addition to collecting and reviewing relevant studies, surveys¹⁹ and articles, this study made an effort to collect relevant policy documents and data on both the CPP and the government. On the CPP, through my key informant networks, I was able to collect, amongst other things:

- Political platforms of the CPP for national development and protection 2008-13: 72 policy points for the implementation of CPP policy platforms (CPP 2008c),
- Forty two policy points for the implementation of the CPP policy platforms for the development of communes/*sangkat* 2007-12 (CPP 2008d),
- The CPP's Statute (CPP 1997)
- The CPP's data and analysis of election result from 1998 to 2008 (CPP 2008a)
- The CPP's membership of the Party's Working Group by provinces (CPP 2008b)

¹⁹ Examples of those useful existing surveys include IRI (2008), Pact (2007), EIC (2008)

- The CPP's membership by provinces (CPP 2010)
- The CPP's list of members of the Central Committee and of Permanent Committee (CPP 2009), and
- Gifts of the Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen and Lok Chumtiev to the people throughout the country as of April 04, 2008 issued by the Cabinet of the Prime Minister (Cabinet of Prime Minister 2008)

These documents provide a very good overview of the CPP's structure and its management. For instance, I learnt that the CPP has a very detailed document showing electoral results for each district and even each commune. In this way, the Party at the central level easily linked the results to the specific party members who were assigned to take care of specific constituencies. Later chapters (especially chapter 7) will elaborate on this. I also learnt that the Party's platforms bear a lot of resemblance to the government's formal development policies.

However, these documents do not tell much about the CPP's actual operation. For instance, the Party's 1997 statute tells very little about the real 'budget' of the party and how it finances its campaign (CPP 1997). Thus, these documents needed to be complemented by key informant interviews at various levels. Later section will elaborate more on this.

On the government, collecting relevant policy documents and data sheets is more straight-forward. Some of the key pieces of data collected included:

- The Government's development policies, budgetary reform documents, and policy documents on decentralization (various years of publication), and
- National budgets from 2008 to 2010, national budget analyses from previous years, and budget allocations to sub-national and local governments since 2002

The government's actual operations, as with the case of the CPP, do not usually reflect what is stated in the formal documents. On the contrary, reflecting the neo-patrimonial nature of the state, a lot of informality was observed. This required that I do key informant interviews with various government officials to understand how such 'informal business' was actually done. For instance, through interviews, I was able to capture the complexity of the budget preparation process, find out how the central

people had tried to hold on to certain budgetary powers, and how the people at the Ministry of Interior and of Finance interacted on the question of decentralization.

It should be noted that, because the government has been dominated by the CPP, most of the government officials I talked to are also CPP party members. Although some of them tried to participate in the interviews as government officials, the party-state inseparability was still an undeniable contextual background to our discussion and to my probing.

I also talked to two senior officials of the opposition party. Like the CPP, the opposition kept some very loosely elaborated formal documents about its arrangements and operation. Therefore, I had to rely more on information gained from my interviews to learn of its actual operation, and about the achievements and challenges they think the party is facing. I also talked to a number of donor and NGO officials who had experience working with the government on various reform issues, and/or with political parties on the ground.

3.3.2. Primary data collection and interviews at sub-national levels

Information collected at the central level helped form a macro-level picture, but it was far from being sufficient in providing the details needed about the on-the-ground mechanisms to answer the research questions. This was why sub-national and local visits were needed. At those levels, I tried to do three things.

First, I wished to understand the perceptions of the people at the sub-national level of the same issues I had investigated with the people at the central level, i.e. the issues of budgetary management, of decentralization and of the CPP's off-budget support. As with the case of the central level, sub-national government agencies are overwhelmingly dominated by the CPP. Therefore, by talking to these people, I expected to obtain their perspective not just about the state, but also the party, and the relationship between the two. By placing the answers from both the central and sub-national level together, I expected to better comprehend the central – sub-national/local relationship within this CPP-dominated administration.

Second, I expected to learn more about the CPP's operation on the ground, especially the way it had created administrative networks and interacted with local voters. As

chapter 1 indicates, the CPP was known to have strengthened its grip in the rural areas by tightening up its administrative network. So, by talking to party officials on the ground, I was seeking to understand how this administration had been set up, and what kind of incentives local party officials had received.

Third, and most importantly, I sought to understand and describe the arrangements of the CPP's off-budget support to rural infrastructure. From my interviews at the central level, together with selected key documents such as the Prime Minister Cabinet report and the list of members in Party Working Group, I had learnt that such off-budget support was distributed throughout the country. But to better capture its dynamics and mechanism, visiting the 'base' – as the CPP people often say when they go to the local level – was necessary for me. I visited 11 districts, and in those districts, 15 communes were selected. The selection was made largely to serve the third purpose above (more on this in a moment).

When I started to visit the district and the communes in early April 2008, I chose to go to two districts with which I had very close contact. I expected that the local authority and the CPP members there would be open and comfortable enough to share information with me. From the two cases, I learnt a lot about the CPP's administrative structure and especially about its off-budget support.

As of May 2008, the fieldwork revealed some primary findings, or hypotheses, which were useful for further exploration. On the off-budget spending, I learnt that its operation has been expanding over time covering the whole country and has become increasingly systematic, but was still kept shadowy. Such shadowy arrangements are called 'the Party's Working Groups for Helping the Base,' hereafter referred to as PWG.

Second, contrary to my own initial expectations, I found that, to party officials (almost all of whom are also government officials) whom I interviewed, the party's off-budget support through the PWG is not something that they need to hide from the outsiders. In fact, the support is considered among the achievements and contributions of the party to rural development. I also learnt that the locally elected officials have played very important roles in the PWG arrangement.

Case selection – Rationale and methods

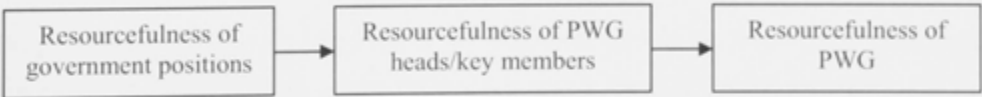
These primary findings convinced me that it was both interesting and possible to expand the fieldwork to cover different geographical locations in order to come up with a more representative picture of the PWG and other aspects of the CPP operation.

By that time, I also developed a hypothesis to examine the variation of the PWG support and functioning. The hypothesis is that such variation comes from two key factors: the remoteness of the locations, and the ‘resourcefulness’ of the PWG heads and key members (chapter 6 has more on the PWG).

First, the study chose cases to contrast the remote areas (which are mainly located in higher land areas), with the lowland, more accessible areas. Such contrast was intended by the study to observe the difference in the arrangements and functioning of PWG and their interactions with local people in areas where people are more accessible and those where people are far from the centre.

The ‘resourcefulness’ refers to the PWG’s ability to help finance local projects. I observed from the early cases that the resourcefulness of a PWG reflects a link between two factors: First, it depends on the resourcefulness of its heads and key members. Second, the resourcefulness of these individuals depends in turn on their positions within the government. This reflects my observation that most of the PWG members are government officials, and that the more lucrative a government position is, the more rent he might seek, and thus the more he is expected to contribute. This specific observation reflects the neo-patrimonial nature of the Cambodian state (Pak et al. 2007). The following diagram simplifies these links.

Figure 5: Determination of PWG resourcefulness



Based on the above reasoning, the study ranks the resourcefulness of PWG’s heads and key members as *high* and *low/medium*. These individuals’ resourcefulness, this study

argues, depends mainly on which ministries and which positions those people hold within the government, as follows²⁰:

Table 1: Government positions of PWG members and resourcefulness

Government and other positions	Resourcefulness
Those from Cabinet of Ministers, Ministries of Finance, Commerce, Agriculture (especially forestry, fishery), Interior, and various revenue-generating and semi-autonomous authorities	<i>High</i>
Those with positions associated with the Prime Minister	<i>High</i>
Those from Ministries of Education, Health, Social Affairs, Women Affairs, Information and other non-revenue generating ministries	<i>Low/Medium</i>
Those from legislative branches (including the National Assembly and Senate)	<i>Low/Medium</i>

The above classification inevitably involves a certain amount of subjectivity, which can lead to possible bias in the selection of cases and variables to understand and distinguish those cases. Despite such limitations, however, the methods as employed can be justified on two grounds for the purpose of this paper. First, the aim of the study is not to present a statistically significant sample of PWG. Instead, it aims at describing and analyzing the little-known arrangements and functioning of the PWGs and drawing their implications on both the evolution of patronage networks and rural development. For this purpose, the intentional selection of cases to capture variations around PWGs is justified. Second, the cases, and the variables selected to observe them, should be seen as guiding signposts aiding the more explorative purpose of the whole study.

When came to the actual fieldwork, the planned case selection was to some extent compromised by the availability of the interviewees. During the fieldwork, some cases had to be dropped because some local authorities were too busy preparing for the election that was coming up in July 2008, while some others, while they did not feel the research topic was too sensitive to give interviews, were asking for formal approval

²⁰ This ranking also partly reflects the findings from a corruption study by Nissen (2005) which asks respondents what groups of people in the government they think are the most and least corrupt. The study also reflects on observations made in the unpublished study by Hughes and Conway (2004) on the policy process in Cambodia.

from the central CPP office – something I could not afford at the time. So the study ended up choosing those who were available and could make the time.

In all, I visited 15 communes, in 11 districts, within ten provinces. Table 2 below breaks down the eleven district cases by the two criteria mentioned above: resourcefulness of PWG and remoteness.

Table 2: Case selection

Criteria for case selection	# of case districts (Total = 11)
Resourcefulness of PWG	
High	5
Low/Medium	6
Remoteness	
Not remote	8
Remote	3

For the cases visited, I was less successful in meeting with provincial level respondents (mainly because most of them were busy), but found the party people at district and commune levels more welcoming and cooperative. At the district and commune levels, I asked to meet the district governor and commune chief, who usually serve as the chiefs of the district and commune party branch respectively (which, organizationally, is distinct from the PWG).

Besides the qualitative information obtained from interviews, two other pieces of information were provided by district and commune level respondents:

- Lists of key members of the district and commune PWG, and
- Lists of the projects provided by the PWG.

The list of support varies in terms of its completeness: in a few cases, the records are complete enough to allow estimation of the dollar value of the PWG supports, while in some others, they only show the types of number of projects provided, e.g. number of classrooms, length of roads and irrigation channels, and number of times supports were provided to a pagoda. As a supplement method, where plausible, I asked the district governors and commune chiefs to use their own personal observations and recollections to come up with their own estimated values of the support.

Research ethics are very important to the kind of fieldwork I undertook. First, I fully recognized that the topic being studied was sensitive in nature – at least, that was what was expected at the start. Thus, confidentiality was treated as the most important ethical concern when conducting the interviews. All the names of people interviewed and places visited, (with exception of provinces because they are big enough to hide specific identity of selected cases) have to be kept confidential.

Second, it was learned that PWG support is viewed differently by different people: for the CPP officials, it has been an act of nation-building and generosity of their party and leadership, while for the opposition people, it is viewed as something close to using corrupt money to buy votes. Knowing such conflicting views exist, I was very prudent not to make the research be seen as taking sides.

3.3.3. Survey with local people

The records and all the key informant interviews as described above focus on the supply side of the PWG. Another part of the study was intended to understand the demand side, i.e. what local people know and think about the party support. To do this, a small survey was conducted covering ten of the 15 communes, or in seven out of the eleven districts visited²¹.

Using semi-structured interviews, the survey was carried out in two groups of electorate. The first group is called 'ordinary people,' which refers to local people who hold no significant jobs within their community besides the usual farming, laboring and running small businesses. About 520 of these people, equivalent to 45 to 55 people from each of the ten surveyed communes, were interviewed. In each commune, they were selected from three villages with different levels of remoteness.

The respondents in this group comprised about 55% male, and 45% female, mainly from 20 to 60 years of age; about 75% are farmers. Demographically, this group represents typical voters in Cambodia, and so, despite its statistical insignificance, the survey provides a rough idea of how voters perceive the party financing.

²¹ The funding for the survey came from a local institute called Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)

Table 3: People survey

Groups of respondents	Number of respondents
Ordinary people	520
Better informed people	200

A second group of respondents were those who might be called ‘better informed people’. About 200 of these respondents were surveyed (or about 20 in each commune). Predominantly male, these people were selected according to their types of work which gave them some unique influence within their community. Such types of work included being members of a pagoda committee, school directors and teachers, vendors, village chiefs and deputy village chiefs.

These people were separately selected for the survey not only because they tend to be better informed about development and other affairs within their communes, but also because they are the so-called ‘head of the wind’ (*me kjol*), who can exercise a certain amount of influence on voting decisions of the ‘ordinary people.’ Historically in Cambodia (see for instance Chandler 2008) and in many other developing countries (See Case 2002; van de Walle 2006), ruling parties have tried to co-opt such *me kjol* groups to help them deliver votes and ensure their local control.

3.3.4. Direct involvement in policy process and media observation

In the field, I had a chance to become directly involved in the policy process relating to decentralization reform in Cambodia. Working in my capacity as a part-time fiscal decentralization expert in the formulation of the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD) from September 2008 to January 2009, I was given a rare opportunity to sit in various government and donor-government meetings. In these meetings, I made a lot of observation on the administrative process of the state management and reform. These events also allowed me to meet more people whom I asked for interviews for this study.

Through these observations, I learnt at first hand about the kind of politics played out through the interactions of key stakeholders’ interests and their power, such as between the Ministries of Interior, Finance, and other line ministries, and the typical and varied attitude between central and sub-national level people. While observing these individuals, I learnt that these key people do not just play a role representing particular governmental levels or agencies; instead, they also have a role in the long chains of

patron-client relationships and domains, which overlap with the realms of the state and the party. Moreover, many of the government people I observed are also known to be heads or key members of the PWG of the CPP.

To complement the data collecting activities described above, I had also carried out a media observations which included my taking notes about CPP activities broadcast on TV in the six months prior to the election days in 2008 and my regular updating of local newspapers when I was conducting fieldwork. Thanks for the ever-increasing and timely updates of local news from Cambodia on the Internet, even during my writing period, I also picked up some of the latest developments about the CPP and Cambodian politics which further helped with my analyses.

Having discussed research methodology and fieldwork, this study proceeds to chapter 4 looking at the historical path of the CPP's rise to dominance.

Chapter 4: Introducing the CPP and its path to domination

Brownlee (2007) argues that to understand a dominant party, its history has to be understood. This chapter, in agreement with Brownlee's argument, takes a historical perspective to better understand the CPP's path to dominance. Its objective is to answer the questions posed in Chapter 2:

- How was the CPP formed and organized?
- From historical discussion, what can we learn about its relationship with the state, the patronage and the people?
- What has the broader political and economic situation been evolving under the CPP's rule?

This chapter provides the context within which the more specific issues to be discussed in following chapters are placed. Opposition parties are also included in the discussion. The chapter shows that, over time, the CPP has become softer and less violent in its approach to ruling. Increasingly, the party has recognized the importance of legitimacy and re-inventing its own image from that of a violent and intimidating party to one that has brought stability and development to Cambodia.

This chapter relies more on secondary data and historical analysis to better understand the path through which the CPP has journeyed to domination. Yet, what is new about it is that it attempts to analyze those data in a framework derived from the literature in chapter 2, i.e. focusing on the formative and institutionalized stage of the CPP, its relationship with the state and patronage, the building of its administrative structure, and equally important, its proven adaptation to electoral politics. In addition to providing the context for subsequent discussion, this chapter also points out what is already known about Cambodia and the CPP, what is not, and how the following chapters will fill in the gaps based on the primary data collected by this study.

4.1. The CPP from 1979 to 1993 – Survival amidst chaos

Although it claims to have been established since 1951 (CPP 2008c), the root of the CPP as it is known today can be traced back to 1979 when it took power from the Khmer Rouge, with backup from the Vietnamese. In post-Khmer Rouge period,

sometimes described as 'Year Zero', Cambodia was in ruins, both physically and in terms of human resources. Against this background, the CPP, then under the name of the 'People's Republic of Kampuchea' (PRK) started from scratch, putting in place the structure of the state and the Party. Following the Vietnamese model, the Party then was structured in ways that penetrate ubiquitously within the states at all levels. Scarcity of financial and human resources presented a big challenge at the time. The process, it seemed, was done in haste, with the idea that let's first have something in place and then let's improvisation took on the task (Gottesman 2003:48-60).

During that earlier 1980s, setting up the party and state was not the only challenge. The PRK's very survival was threatened from the on-going civil war with the Khmer Rouge and other resistance groups. These groups, the Khmer Rouge included, were supported by the West, while the PRK received its backup from the Vietnamese and the East. The imperative of war very much defined the development of the Party and the State structure at the time. At the central level, the building of state bureaucracy was not given much attention; various ministries were set up, but were hardly given any clear functions, let alone sufficient resources and people (Gottesman 2003:48-60).

With the war going on in the rural areas, it was important for the PRK to establish a loyal sub-national administration whose jobs was to execute directives sent from the central level. The village however was left mostly autonomous of the centre: village chiefs and deputies were appointed because local people knew and trusted them, not because of their political affiliations (Slocumb 2004).

The history of the CPP during the 1980s indicated the inevitability of the conflation between the party and the state. The belief that strong local administration is important to the power base of the Party also has its root in that period. What is important to note was that the development of the state, the Party, and the entanglement between them were developing in a hasty manner (Gottesman 2003). With loosely defined and implemented rules and structures, it did not take much time even during that early time for corruption to become a concern for the party. The recruitment and distribution of benefits to party and state officials before long were filled with problems of nepotism (Gottesman 2003:48-60).

But, given the desperate economic condition, most of the corruption was petty (Gottesman 2003:223-237). The more serious activities came from the military which, with its loosely defined discretion, was using its power to seek rents from the timber business, smuggling goods, and extorting money from merchants. The leadership at the time was well aware of these problems, but was willing to overlook them for the sake of the war itself. The leadership, moreover, was willing to push ahead some other unpopular policies including military conscription and forced labor, which led to violence and intimidation by the military, police and local authorities of local people (Gottesman 2003:223-237).

In term of the leadership of the party, the period leading up to 1989 witnessed the rise and fall of particular individuals and groups, who later on represented different factions (or networks) within the Party. The first group whose influence was in decline after 1979 comprised the former communists who fled to Vietnam during the 1970s war and returned to the country to help oust the Khmer Rouge. This group, it was said, was seen as not being obedient enough to the Vietnamese. As early as 1982, a new group of revolutionaries came onto the power scene, including Heng Samrin, the first head of state, Chea Sim, the Minister of Interior, and Hun Sen, who started as the Minister of International Affairs, and later on became Prime Minister (Gottesman 2003:223-237). These three men are still in power today: Hun Sen is the Prime Minister and the strongman of Cambodia, Chea Sim is the President of CPP, and Heng Samrin is the Honorary President of the CPP and President of the National Assembly. Nowadays, the photographs of these three men are presented together along with the CPP logo.

Chea Sim was at the time considered the most influential, preferring to wield his power through personal connections and appointing his people to key positions. Among those people was Sar Kheng, Chea Sim's brother-in-law, who not long after Chea Sim's rise, was made the chief of the cabinet of the Central Committee (Gottesman 2003:214-217). Sar Kheng is currently the first Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. Until today, Sar Kheng is still thought to be in Chea Sim's faction. While Chea Sim was the first to practise the art of building patronage networks, it was the strongman-to-be Hun Sen who took such practices to another level.

At the start of the PRK, Hun Sen was appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was known to be good at appeasing the Vietnamese and a quick learner, especially

when it came to maneuvering through the bureaucracy. One thing he learned at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was that, given the loosely defined structure and procedures at the time, the ministry was a fertile place to build a patronage system. As a Minister, Hun Sen saw the importance of this, and was more successful in attracting many intellectuals to work for him (Gottesman 2003:207-8).

In 1982, Hun Sen was appointed the Deputy Prime Minister, a new post which allowed him to further extend his network. By the time he was appointed Prime Minister in 1985, Hun Sen had already created his own base of power using his personal connections in the Council of Ministers (CoM) (Gottesman 2003:211). Hun Sen strengthened his base within the CoM and expanded the size and responsibility of the CoM itself. He was also active in recruiting educated Cambodians who had returned from Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. In the next four years (i.e. until 1989), Hun Sen's role became increasingly significant, driving a number of key policies including that on the unpopular military conscription as well as the economic liberalization that took place in 1989 (Gottesman 2003:212-34).

Through these years, Hun Sen was seen by some people as a reformist and a pragmatist. Not very ideological to begin with, Hun Sen was quick to understand the changes taking place elsewhere in the socialist world. It was clear to him that, with the Eastern bloc now crumbled, PRK would soon be on its own. Once again, the survival of the regime itself was at stake. The leadership then, with Hun Sen playing a leading role, was pushing to reform both its war strategy and economic development. The results of these reforms were Hun Sen's negotiation with King Sihanouk, and economic liberalization in the late 1980s (Gottesman 2003:276-79).

The move to a free market economy was one of the first examples of the CPP's adaptive strategy and a good example of the thinking of the Party's leadership. The economic reform was a survival strategy adopted to respond to the most urgent needs. As such, it was not carefully planned, leading to a lot of corruption in privatization and other liberalization policies. The reform brought corruption to a new level, accelerating the practice of rent-seeking among public officials who used their authority to exploit privatization transactions and colluded with private businesses.

Three points are of importance about this change. First, all the corrupt activities were happening within a patronage way: profits earned by state and party cadres in the free market filtered upward to powerful patrons and those with the authority to give permission for private business ventures (Gottesman 2003:276-300). Second, this period also saw the rise of economic elites within the ranks of the party. This new group, unlike the military and older generation comrades, knew better how to deal with private business people both within and outside the country. Third, this period also saw Prime Minister Hun Sen accumulating his influence rapidly by mobilizing and embracing this new group of economic elites (Gottesman 2003:276-300).

The rent seeking that was unleashed led to an even weaker state bureaucracy, where low-paid state officials were widely involved in taking bribes, and powerful officials, confronted with a new amount of wealth, were seeking rents for personal enrichment. Provincial authorities were also let loose, colluding with private businesses and keep tax money for both themselves and their patrons at the higher level. In Gottesman's words (2003:329), 'local positions were valued according to their revenue-generating potential... authority was handed down; money was passed upward'.

In other words, the rent accumulated was shared among a small group of people who held or had access to the state authority. The rent was not translated to any development on the ground. On the contrary, local people were experiencing exploitation and suppression resulting from the predatory acts of state officials. That was the image of the state and the CPP that stuck in people's minds from that period.

What happened to the Party amidst all these changes? How involved was the party in all these rent-seeking and patronage network expansions? Members of several party committees such as youth, women and propaganda who were not part of the state apparatus found themselves cut off from the new game of self-enrichment, as they did not possess any potential for revenue generation. Provincial level party officials, most of whom also held state positions, however, stayed relevant, busying themselves with new opportunities for making money. By that time, then, it was already clear that the party as an institution was already changed, for it was personal relationships rather than an ideological strand that held people together (Gottesman 2003:329-30).

At first, the patronage was mainly focusing on personal enrichment. However, in expectation of election that was about to be held (and eventually took place in 1993), state officials also started to think of how to manage their patronage networks for the benefits of the Party (Gottesman 2003:329-30). This subtle change can be seen as an early instance of patronage evolving to be more tied up with the Party's interests in order to respond to electoral pressures. The Party and its leadership saw the value of patronage-based support, and thus allowed them to benefit directly and personally from the local economy. This strategy was devised and pushed particularly by Prime Minister Hun Sen, who believed that 'if there aren't any [profits, the system] won't work.' (quoted in Gottesman 2003:299).

Although there was some mentioning of party member making contributions to help prepare the Party for the election (Mehta and Mehta 1999), it was at the time not really a systematic mobilization of resources to fund rural development projects as would occur from 1995 onward. What the Party seemed to focus on then was strengthening the administrative structure at the local level and using mainly violence and intimidation (Heder and Ledgerwood 1996). The thinking at the time was consistent with the CPP's background as a Communist party which normally relied on its rural base to stay in power. Thus, building local administrative networks was accelerated. In doing that, the CPP was also working toward including the military, police and local authority as part of its system to mobilize people and conduct surveillance at the local level, all of which was put into use to obtain votes in the 1993 election (Gottesman 2003).

4.2. The CPP from 1993 to 2008 – From losing to dominating

The CPP's organizational capacity proved inadequate and it lost at the 1993 election. Democratic elections, together with the unprecedented involvement of the West, changed the rules of the game. To rule a country, a regime now had to win the election. And the CPP had just lost that election. However, the party had other more forceful elements of power: its control over the loosely structured state apparatus, especially at the provincial level downward, as well as the penetrating patronage networks that ran through it. The CPP first rejected the results of the election, but later on, was able and accepted a uniquely arranged coalition government, wherein Prince Ranaridh of the

winning Royalist Party was to become the first Prime Minister, and Hun Sen the second (Mehta and Mehta 1999:111).

A brief discussion about the Royalist party is necessary here. Commonly known as Funcipec (*Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Cooperatif*), the party was led by Prince Ranaridh, Sihanouk's son. Funcipec emerged out of the National United Front, which was founded on March 21, 1991 at the Cambodia-Thai border to 'liberate Cambodia from Vietnamese occupation' (Kovick and Emling 2003). In 1993, although Funcipec's ability to campaign in rural areas was restricted due to intimidation and violence perpetrated by the CPP, the party's connection with the former King who was still popular, gave it a competitive edge. It also campaigned on the basis that it was a fighter against the Vietnamese occupation and that CPP's leadership were themselves Khmer Rouge (Sullivan 2005). Funcipec brought along a new type of elite into Cambodia, including many Cambodian diasporas, who had fled the wars. These diasporas were later labeled by the CPP as people who were always ready to flee (Hughes 2009).

The coalition was the first government elected after Cambodia had reverted to a monarchy. The well-liked and missed King Sihanouk returned as the King. The senior partner in the coalition at the time, Funcipec, was enjoying its 'sweet time,' although it did not last long. Besides the popular Royalist brand, Funcipec was not administratively strong even when it had just won the election. Right after coming to power, the Royalist party's main concerns were not only to compete with its coalition partner, but also to manage its own internal affairs. In addition, despite holding a majority of the ministerial portfolios, the Royalist party as a winner was not successful in penetrating the CPP-controlled sub-national administration. Every time the Prince complained about his inability to appoint even a normal bureaucrat, Hun Sen responded with a politically correct statement about the separation between political and bureaucratic spheres, while he himself knew perfectly well that such a separation did not exist in Cambodia (Mehta and Mehta 1999:113).

As with the CPP, internally, in the wake of the electoral defeat, rumors were heard that Hun Sen's authority and leadership style were being questioned within the Party. The Party congress held in 1996 led to speculation that factions existed within the Party, especially between those of Hun Sen and Chea Sim. Hun Sen came out quickly to

scotch those rumors (Mehta and Mehta 1999:113). As with the party-based patronage network, although there was no specific evidence about its changing nature at the time, anecdotal evidence suggested that it did not shrink with the party's defeat; instead, it was expanding itself quietly to cover private Cambodian businessmen and tycoons (Mehta and Mehta 1999:113).

The power sharing between the CPP and Funcipec did not turn out well. An event which occurred in 1994 is worth mentioning here: the Royalist finance minister, Sam Rainsy, was dismissed in 1994. His dismissal was said to be the result of both the CPP's strategy to divide the Royalists, and the Prince's personal resentment of him (Mehta and Mehta 1999). In 1995, Sam Rainsy went on to form his own party, the Khmer National Party (KNP). Despite significant legal obstacles and political violence the KNP had to face, its popularity grew rapidly. The party was however still small in term of membership and was weak in term of organizational structure.

Politics at the time continued to be dominated by the power struggle within the coalition, which eventually led to factional fighting in 1997. Prince Ranaridh was ousted from the country. The CPP claimed the fighting was its pre-emptive action against the Royalists who were alleged to have cooperated with the former Khmer Rouge to overthrow the coalition. The Royalists called it an outright 'coup' (Roberts 2001). Regardless of the accusations, what the CPP had done in 1997 and afterward was quite successful in putting itself back onto the path to domination.

The 1997 victory was the result of not only the CPP's military strength, but also its strategy of divide-and-rule aiming at weakening the Royalists. Prince Ranaridh at the time was not only facing a military defeat, but was also charged by the CPP-dominated court for illegally importing weapons. His party was drastically weakened, being split into at least nine factions. The Party had been having internal problems since the 1993 government formation (Mehta and Mehta 1999:119-20). In addition to internal conflicts, the CPP was reasonably suspected of being behind the split (Mehta and Mehta 1999:250). Since then, CPP has repeatedly used divide-and-rule strategies to weaken the opposition (Blue et al. 2009).

Right after the 1997 fighting, the CPP was making efforts to restore its own legitimacy in the face of international donors, some of whom were withholding their support for

Cambodia, but none had so far as to call the fighting a 'coup.' After a period of diplomatic effort, the CPP was able to win back the support of the regional and international community who understood that the CPP, given all of its less democratic characteristics, was the only party able to bring stability to this war-torn country (Sullivan 2005). But the CPP knew it had to do more than that to ensure both external and domestic legitimacy of its rule. In addition to stability, the CPP after the 1997 incident had to hold a free and fair election in 1998, as expected (Sullivan 2005).

The CPP, and Prime Minister Hun Sen, tend to think like chess players, planning several strategic moves at the same time. In parallel to defeating the Royalists using outright military strength and the divide-and-rule strategy, the CPP also managed to neutralize the monarchy, particularly King Sihanouk himself. By the time Prince Ranaridh was ousted, the ailing King had already acknowledged Hun Sen as Cambodia's strongman. After the fighting, he no longer supported his own son, the Prince, but backed Hun Sen's claim to the UN seat after the 1997 fighting (Mehta and Mehta 1999:250). The King was trying to save the monarchy itself, and taking side with Hun Sen was his survival strategy, something that Sihanouk has been particularly good at. From then on, the monarchy ceased to be the CPP's problem, but its source of legitimacy.

In preparing for the 1998 elections, CPP and its leader were trying to adapt and strike an appropriate balance between control and legitimacy in winning and ruling. The fear that his CPP might lose the 1998 election was very real for Hun Sen at the time. However, the CPP leadership also understood that it could not just rely on its administrative ability to mobilize votes (which involved some amount of intimidation and vote-buying) to deliver victory. Doing that, even if the party did win, would not make the election free and fair enough in the eyes of international community.

Consequently, other strategies were initiated. First, the party was trying to gradually soften its image and broaden its appeal (Mehta and Mehta 1999:247). It did that by intensifying its support for rural infrastructure projects as a way to restore and invent a more favorable image. Such support, as chapters 6 and 7 will show, has been expanded and arranged around the so-called Party Working Group (PWG) of the CPP. In addition to this, it also became more vigorous in using its divide-and-rule strategies to weaken its opposition, which then included both the Royalists and the KNP.

In 1998, a KNP senior official, allegedly paid off by the CPP, formed a splinter group and claimed the party's name. Sam Rainsy filed a complaint to the Ministry of Interior, but to no avail. Sam Rainy was eventually forced to adopt his own name for his party ensuring that voters could identify the party with himself, and thus called the party the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP).

The CPP did win the 1998 election, with 41.4 % of the votes. The Royalists got 31.7%, and SRP 14.3 %. The level of electoral violence was still high especially in some rural provinces (Sullivan 2005). However, the result of the election was accepted by the international community. But the result was not all positive. Hun Sen was losing in two of his strongholds: his birthplace province, Kompong Cham, and Kandal where he lives. Hun Sen since 1993 had been pumping in a lot of his personally-raised funds to support development in these two provinces. Losing them, therefore, was a personal disappointment, and a somewhat negative rating for Hun Sen as an individual politician (Mehta and Mehta 1999:247). But, as will be shown in later chapters, he would not be deterred. Instead, over the years, he and his party would increase its support for such development activities, in order to build its image.

The Royalists and the SRP at first rejected the electoral result. But after a period of political deadlock, with pressure from both the international community and the King himself, Prince Ranaridh agreed to form a coalition government with the CPP, this time as a 'junior' partner. SRP was left alone as an opposition party. Sam Rainsy, the President of the SRP, never trusted the Prince, so when the Prince left him to form the coalition with Hun Sen, Sam Rainsy felt he had been betrayed for the second time. The lack of trust between the two opposition leaders worked only to the advantage of the CPP, which was restlessly working to consolidate its power in virtually every aspect of the state (Un 2006).

As the winning partner in the coalition, the CPP controlled most of the key ministries, including the Ministry of Interior, Finance, CoM, Forestry, etc. some of which used to be in the hand of the Royalist (Roberts 2009). Ministerial takeover completed the domination of the CPP whose control over provincial, district and commune had never been challenged. Another important development was the creation of the Senate, to be presided over by the CPP's President Chea Sim. Chea Sim before 1998 was the President of the National Assembly, but the position was now given to Prince Ranaridh.

The Senate was a new 'post' created to accommodate the growing number of politicians wanting titles within the government (Roberts 2009). This study argues that, given the usual weakness of the legislative branch in Cambodia, the Senate was intended to be a place where mostly the 'old guard' were 'kicked upstairs.' That Chea Sim was being put up as the President of this new legislative body was a clear indication of his declining influence.

Partly to appease the international community and partly in its own interest, the CPP after 1998 launched various institutional reform programs, ranging from military demobilization, civil service reforms, and more noticeably and particularly relevant to this study, decentralization. In 2002, the CPP-led government held elections at the commune level, which until then was controlled by CPP-appointed chiefs, most of whom had been holding the posts since before 1993. The CPP won more than 98% of the chief positions at the commune election. This meant that, with the election, the CPP, while losing only less than 2% of its control, now ruled the Cambodian countryside, this time with electoral legitimacy.

The Royalists continued on to lose dramatically in the 2002 election, polling half a million fewer votes compared to 1998, while the SRP was emerging to replace the Royalists as an opposition party (Rusten et al. 2004; Sullivan 2005). The second commune election was held in 2007 and the result was the same major victory for the CPP.

The next national election was in 2003, and expectedly, the CPP won even more votes, but not enough to control two-thirds of the parliamentary seats to form the government on its own. The SRP and Royalists once again used this Constitutional requirement to prevent the CPP from creating the government. The deadlock went on for about a year. The CPP and Hun Sen were arguing that, without a new government, the existing one would have to continue as a 'house-keeping' government (Sullivan 2005). During that period of deadlock, a few interesting points emerged.

First, the demand from the SRP and the Royalists together indirectly indicated the importance of Hun Sen as an individual politician within the Party. The SRP and the Royalist specified that they would join the government only if there was no Hun Sen. The opposition was also staging various public rallies attacking the Prime Minister

(Sullivan 2005). The opposition, this study reflects back, was expecting that by blaming Hun Sen as the cause of the problem, they would subtly ignite the long-suspected factional problems within the Party, especially between Hun Sen and Chea Sim factions.

Confronted with this deadlock, the CPP and Hun Sen, surprisingly, showed a lot of restraint and went along with a series of negotiations demanded by the opposition (Sullivan 2005). With all the power it had by the year 2003, it was quite tempting for the CPP to use a rather openly coercive method to suppress the opposition. But it did not. Instead, it chose the more patient approach of breaking up the opposition by luring the Royalists to join the government, with the alleged offer of bribes to its key officials.

Complementing that, the CPP was also using support from King Sihanouk to indirectly pressure the Royalist party to give in. Consequently, in mid 2004, the Royalists agreed to the CPP's favorable terms for joining the coalition (Sullivan 2005). The attempt by the opposition parties to ignite factional problems within the CPP back-fired. Confident now that they could go alone ruling the country, the CPP proposed in 2005 to amend the two-thirds majority requirement in the Constitution. The SRP, which believed it had been betrayed for the third time by the Royalists, supported the proposal.

The amendment made the political future of the Royalists very bleak. But it was not just the amendment. The Royalists' internal crackdown continued to worsen. Just before the 2008 election, Prince Ranaridh himself was voted out of the Party. He went off to form a new Party and named it after himself. In their 2008 campaign, the Royalists had almost nothing to offer but the promise that the Prince would bring prosperity to Cambodia just as his father did during the 1970s²². The SRP seemed to be a stronger opposition. It was campaigning strongly on the land grabbing issue, the high price of gas, corruption, and the border problem²³. But it was suffering from many internal problems as well, reasonably believed to have been caused by CPP's divisive strategies. In the three month period before the election, its President was sued by the CPP, and some of its parliamentary members and activists were bought off (Thayer 2009).

²² Personal TV broadcast observation from April to July 2008

²³ *ibid*

Only a few cases of violence and intimidation were reported during the 2008 election (Blue et al. 2009), an improvement which suggested that the CPP has become softer in its strategies for winning votes. Rhetorically, the CPP in 2008 was campaigning more on a platform of development and stability, and less on its name as a savior of Cambodian people from the Khmer Rouge²⁴. This is different from the previous elections: in 1993 its rhetoric emphasized its savior role, in 1998 it was hammering security and stability, and now it was development that it was taking the lead. By development, the CPP was actually emphasizing the fact that in the last 15 years or so, its members, particularly the Prime Minister Hun Sen, had been increasingly helping build roads, schools, irrigation projects, and pagodas all over the country. This was a very innovative and effective strategy that the CPP has increasingly come to rely on building its image and creating legitimacy in the eyes of the rural people. This claim will be substantiated with empirical data and analyses presented in chapters 6 and 7.

From my media and field observation, the CPP campaign was also replete with gift giving. Everywhere the CPP people went, in the 2008 or previous elections, rice, soaps, MSG, sarongs were distributed. The SRP equated such practices and the giving of development projects with vote buying. More discussion on these CPP's controversial practices will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7. However, from my field visits, the SRP was also involved in such gift giving. In some communes, visiting SRP officials provided 15 packs of vitamins for each household.

SRP has also been accused of promising its local activists the positions of district and provincial governors should SRP win. The CPP saw this practice and used it to attack the SRP for running a scam. In some districts, the Prime Minister Hun Sen recently recalled, people were selling their cattle and rice fields to finance the (SRP) party, but then found out that at least ten to 15 people in the same districts were promised the same governor position²⁵. However, this study argues, given the lack of resources afforded by the SRP, and the existing domination by the CPP, such false promises and small gifts from the SRP are on a minor scale. In spite of allegation about vote buying, the 2008 election was run with fair normality.

²⁴ Personal media observation from April to July 2008

²⁵ Hun Sen, broadcast on TVK, February 24, 2010

4.3. The CPP from 2008 until now – Alone in the driving seat

The CPP won in 2008 – more than it had expected. When the CPP was proposing to have the two third majority requirement of the Constitution amended, it could be argued that the Party was rather unsure of its ability to win two thirds of the parliamentary seats. However, in 2008 the CPP won 90 out of the 123 parliamentary seats, more than the two thirds needed. The SRP managed to win 26 seats. Prince Ranaridh got only 2 seats, a result so devastating that it forced him and other Royalist members to resign from politics altogether. The CPP went off to form a government on its own for the first time.

However, the CPP ceded some posts (some as high as Deputy Prime Minister) to some individuals who used to be Royalist members but who have been more ‘amicable’ with the CPP in the last five or ten years (Thayer 2009). While the CPP was on the rise, King Sihanouk abdicated and won support from the CPP-controlled Council of the Throne to appoint his 50 year-old bachelor and soft-spoken son, Sihamony, as the next King (Thayer 2009).

With its ever-expanding domination, the CPP as a political organization has also been transformed. Typical of a political party in a developing country, the CPP is non-ideological, but pragmatic in shaping its appeals to the voter. Its logo is a Khmer-style angel wishing people good luck and prosperity. It has also tried to associate itself with local development, depicting its logo and the photos of its leadership along with pictures of infrastructure projects it has helped to build in the last 15 years or so. In this image building, the Party also continuously strove to strengthen its tight and well-organized administrative network.

From the fieldwork conducted for this study, it was observed that the CPP structure as of 2008 had come closer and was more identifiable with the state structure. The party now has a structure that reaches down to lower than the village level. That level is called ‘group’ which consists of eight to ten households. Heads of the ‘groups,’ working under the supervision of CPP-appointed village chiefs and elected CPP commune chiefs, are responsible for maintaining the current members, attracting new members, conducting surveillance, and mobilizing people for party-related activities²⁶. When agreeing to be a member, a villager would be given a party photo-ID. Being a

²⁶ Fieldwork interviews with CPP provincial party chief, May 17-18, 2008.

member means that the person somewhat agrees to be seen as a part of the CPP's network, a key benefit of which is that he or she will not be identified as a target for abuse or to be excluded from whatever benefits that come through the network itself (Hughes 2003; Hughes 2006). However, being a member, it should be noted, does not mean that the person will vote for the CPP.

Prime Minister Hun Sen stood out amidst the rising domination of the CPP. Like his party's image, his image too has been changing, but in less obvious and rather contradictory way. As his biographer summed up about ten years ago, Hun Sen the strongman is a different person to different people: reformer, democratic, a dictator, a strategist (Mehta and Mehta 1999). Such conflicting images of him still persist – probably intentionally. To the local people, this study observes, he tries to portray himself as one of them by harvesting rice, walking barefoot with his entourage in the rice fields; to the donors and some ministerial officials, he portrays himself as a reform-minded leader.

Sometimes, he claims he might run for at least two more terms, at others, he talks about preparing the next generation for leadership; to some of his subordinates, he is a strict boss, scolding them on TV for some wrongdoings, and to his opposition, he wields words used by street gangs to attack them²⁷. Lately, he has even tried the ideas of making the rural people believe he is the incarnation of a glorious peasant king²⁸. With his rising influence, it seems also that any potential within-party challenges have been minimized²⁹.

After winning the 2008 election, the CPP, as one long time political observer plainly put it, 'controls virtually everything.'³⁰ Even so, domination is a process, not an end state, and the CPP, intentionally or not, continues to adapt itself to the changing environment. Two recent trends to further the CPP's domination have been observed. First, it is increasingly evident that the CPP is now working to co-opt more private interests, either local or foreign investors to come under its umbrella. It is a common understanding that in Cambodia, anyone who wants to do business must have good

²⁷ Personal media observation from April to July 2008

²⁸ *TVK*, November 30, 2009

²⁹ Just in 2008, Hun Sen ousted a four star general known to be closely tied with the ailing Chea Sim on the charge he was involving land grabbing problem, *Cambodia Daily*, Jan 23, 2009

³⁰ November 06, 2009

connections with the CPP and its influential elites (Cock 2010). Many of CPP elites and their families have also become more involved in business, opening new hospitals, private schools, and farms³¹. Some others however have been involved in the 'less normal' businesses, namely, land speculation, with some even accused of land grabbing³².

With the Royalist now gone, the only noticeable opposition party remaining is the SRP. In the 2008 elections, despite all the political interference from the CPP, it still managed to win an additional two seats, increasing its number from 24 to 26. However, for the CPP, the SRP is still too small to present any immediate political threat. It is not only small in terms of parliamentary representatives, but also (or, more importantly) small because it has no place in and no access to the executive branch. That means it is not only small but also poor. CPP politicians, during the recent electoral campaign, mocked the opposition when they said to the people: *'How can they deliver you a car when they themselves ride a bicycle?'*³³ In addition, the CPP national politicians, attempting to prevent their people from defecting to the opposition, sometimes uses a line like: *'Who would want to leave a villa to stay in a hut?'*³⁴

However, when meeting with some national and sub-national activists of the SRP, I noticed a sense of optimism among them³⁵. Of course, who would want to say in an interview that his or her party will remain a loser for as far as they can see? Yet, their optimism is not entirely an illusion. Compared to the 1998 election, the SRP in 2008 increased its votes from 14.3% to 22% or from 700,000 to about 1,320,000 votes. With the decentralization reform (chapter 8 has more on this), SRP had managed to win 16.7% of the votes in the 2002 commune elections and 25.2% in the 2007 elections (CPP 2008a).

Now, the SRP has about 2,660 councilors at the commune level, equivalent to 23.5% to total number of commune councilors. As a result of the 2009 elections at the district and provincial levels, the SRP also managed to win 61 (16.31%) of provincial council seats, and 518 of district council seats (18.1%). The Royalist gets around 3% of total

³¹ The example is the family of the Minister of Defense whose family started a hospital close to his residence (Personal observation)

³² *Cambodia Daily*, Jan 26, 2009; Personal observation of the author

³³ Note from the fieldwork, April to June, 2008

³⁴ Fieldwork interviews, July 24, 2008

³⁵ Interviews with SRP officials, April 03, 2010

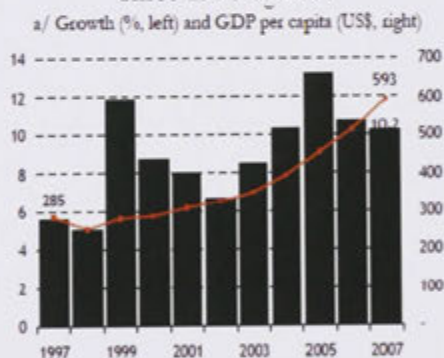
seats on both provincial and district councils³⁶. Once again, however, because the executive branches of the provinces and districts are appointed by the central level, the SRP still does not have its people within the administration, and thus, still has no access to the state at the sub-national levels. However, the SRP leadership, with such an electoral record, does have a reason for some optimism – or at least something to tell its supporters.

4.4. Political and economic situation under the CPP

State governance under the CPP has been weak and corruption rampant. Transparency International in 2008 ranked Cambodia the 14th most corrupt country out of the 179 nations surveyed. Corruption has also been consistently pointed out as the biggest detriment to business and investment activities in the country³⁷. Recently, however, there seems to be increasing recognition within the CPP about the corruption associated with own officials. At its 35th annual Central Committee Congress, for instance, Hun Sen, who was confirmed as the candidate for Prime Minister in 2013, warned that he would not provide protection to any party officials committing illegal activities³⁸. How this warning will turn out in reality remains to be seen. But it is expected to be a very difficult task, trying to curb systematic corruption in Cambodia.

Despite that, however, Cambodia under the CPP has experienced unprecedented political stability and security for the last 10-15 years, which seems to have increased in parallel with the party's sense of security of being in power. This improvement has obviously been felt among people especially those in rural areas (Meerkerk et al. 2008). Economic growth has also been impressive. Starting in 1999, the economy

Figure 6: Cambodia economic growth since 1997 to 2007



Source: Guimbert 2010

began to accelerate in parallel with political stability and the CPP's increasing dominance. Up to 2007, average growth was calculated to be almost 10% (9.8% to be exact) per annum, with inflation below 5%. The growth has increased GDP per capita

³⁶ *Neak Kloeameul Bulletin*, No. 38, Year 11, June 30, 2009, based on NEC data

³⁷ Cambodia Daily newspaper, June 16, 2008

³⁸ Phnom Penh Post newspaper, July 23, 2010

from US\$285 in 1997 to US\$593 in 2007, and contributed to reduction of poverty from 39% in 1994 to 34% 2004, and 31% in 2007 (RGC 2008b; Guimbert 2010).

The Cambodian economy has been driven by four sectors: garments, tourism, construction and agriculture. The industry and service sectors annually account for 4.5 and 4.8 points of growth, respectively, while only 2.0 for the agriculture sector. What this means is that the economy has undergone a significant change: in 2007, agriculture ranked behind the other two sectors, a situation of complete opposition to that of the year 1993. Such speed of transformation makes Cambodia one of those countries experiencing sustained economic growth over the past half century (Guimbert 2010). The rate of growth is even more impressive given the fact that Cambodia is a post-conflict country.

While the economy has been growing, so has inequality, the World Bank reported in 2007. In the period from 1994 to 2004, the average living standard measured as consumption of goods and services per capita per day rose by 32%. However, for the poorest fifth of the population, the rise was only 8%. The Bank also found that the inequality rise has been driven mainly by increasing intra-rural inequality, which in turn was pushed up in the period from 1993 to 1997. The magnitude of inequality is noted to be most alarming when the issues of land ownership and land grabbing are considered (World Bank 2007).

Donors have become key influential actors in Cambodia, watching the rise of the CPP. The donors' importance derives directly from the amount of money they have poured into this post-conflict country. For the period from 1992 to 2009, Cambodia received US\$9.79 billion in foreign aid. Aid per capita increased from US\$40 in 1992 to US\$80 in 2009 (RGC 2010a). This is more or less the same as the government revenue per capita which amounted to about US\$75 in 2008. The relationship between donors and the RGC has been mixed: on some policies (such as decentralization) they are partners, but on some (such as on forestry) they are harsh critics of each other. It is also noted that, despite their long working experience with the same government led by the CPP, the donor community in Cambodia seems to have little understanding of this dominant political organization. A prominent scholar of Cambodia, Caroline Hughes, put that the CPP is still like a 'black box' to outsiders such as donors, especially Western ones (Hughes 2009).

Despite the large volume of aid and the years of reforms, Cambodia's public administration is still weak. State budget resources are still small, which in turn leads to, among other things, low salaries for state employees. While the government has been working to increase average salary from about US\$30 per month in 2004 to US\$64 in 2008 (RGC 2008b), this level is very low, much lower than what is required to earn a decent living. The low salaries have led to high absenteeism among teachers and health workers, police taking bribes along the streets and many other everyday forms of petty corruption.

Since 1993, another hard-to-miss fact about Cambodian governance is the surging number of international and local NGOs within the country. These NGOs are mostly funded by donors, and are working on various activities ranging from human rights advocacy to direct service delivery at the community level. However, the relationship between the government and the NGOs has been an unfriendly and untrusting one (Hughes and Un 2007). Some NGOs, especially those in advocacy work, have been criticizing the government on the issue of human rights and corruption. The government responds, claiming that those NGOs do the talking only to get money from donors and that the NGOs too are corrupt. Recently, the government made public its plans to introduce a new law to regulate the activities of about 3,000 NGOs working in the country³⁹.

Cambodian people in general are still very quiescent in their interactions with the government and state agencies. Firstly, there is still limited demand for information relating to public matters, and the government has not been accustomed to the culture of information sharing either (Malena and Chhim 2009). Paternalistic attitudes between citizens and authority, citizens' lack of awareness of information rights and a general sense of disempowerment contribute to their reluctance to demand information. It is not that people do not feel they need to know about what is going on around them. However, their curiosity is still limited by matters that can directly and immediately affect their lives, which include security and health (CAS and World Bank 2007).

Cambodian people are well aware that the government is corrupt. For example, they know that to get a job within the government, one needs spend at least \$100 to become even a normal policeman (PACT 2007). People experience corruption through their

³⁹ *Phnom Penh Post Newspaper*, April 30, 2010

interactions with state authorities, including policemen, teachers, and health workers. People seem to grow rather accustomed to corruption, and, in some instances, even find small corruption normal and helpful, allowing them to get things done quickly when dealing with the government (PACT 2007). This does not mean that people like being asked for informal fees; it is just that they have no choice but to pay the small amount of ‘gratitude money’ to get things moving. However, corruption can have severe impact on poorer people’s daily lives (Nissen 2005; EIC 2006).

The realization about corruption and its ill-effects has, however, rarely led to people’s outright protest. Rarely that people take up collective action to demand for better education and health services, for more support in agriculture and irrigations, etc. However, lately, there have been more popular protests, most of them related to questions of land conflict and disputes between people with private companies or with state agencies (Adhoc 2009). This means that people are triggered to take action only when the foundations of their own survival (such as land) are threatened. When such protests happen, there have often been crackdowns by the military or police. Increasingly, complaints filed in courts by the people go un-answered. Increasingly, too, people who do not trust the court system turn to the patrimonial way of expressing their grievance, protesting in front of the Prime Minister residence, asking for his support, while also praising him and saying that only he can help them (Adhoc 2009).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter concludes that the CPP rise to domination is attributed to many factors, some are easy to explain and identify, some are not; some are internal to the CPP as a political organization, and some are external. Luck, although not much mentioned earlier, was an unexplainable factor in the CPP’s rise amidst Cambodia’s up and down recent history. Most of the CPP high ranking people, the top leadership included, came to power seemingly by a twist of fate – or at least, that was their starting point. Most of these people were peasants whose fates were changed because of the coup that ousted King Sihanouk in 1970, the Khmer Rouge, and all the civil wars and chaos that these events entailed. The coming to power of the CPP as a political organization was the result of these beyond-control factors.

The existing literature also points out that the CPP had a timing advantage in being the first to come to control the state, if compared to the Royalists and the SRP. Actually, it

did not just come to control, but also put in place the state structure with a virtually clean slate. On top of that, the fact that the CPP was established as a communist party further enhanced its control over the state right from its formation phase (1979 – 1993). This makes the state-party overlap a more expected phenomenon – even a natural one, I would say.

Being a Communist Party at the time directed the CPP to control the state not only at the central but also sub-national levels, working slowly to put in place very tightly knit local administrative and surveillance networks. This, together with the fact that many CPP were themselves peasants, or at least from peasant origin, not only enhanced the party's control over, but its understanding about rural people and rural politics. All these are the CPP's strengths over the Royalists and the SRP who were not only late-comers, but also unfamiliar with rural Cambodia.

The CPP in its early years, moreover, did not only control the state bureaucracy. Instead, it had also in the process nurtured and put into use patrimonial practices and rent-seeking activities that run through the state. Given the reality of the 1980s, such patronage networks, which seemed to be so naturally attached to the CPP, emerged and expanded as a way to keep the state itself functioning and surviving. However, patronage was also nurtured to serve individuals and their groups' interest. At the leadership level, from the examples of Cheam Sim in the 1980s to Hun Sen, building patronage networks has been seen as the real power base for these individuals. And from this reality, it seems that if any factional conflict has existed in the CPP, it has surely been patronage-based. In addition, reflecting the pyramid shape, the patronage base under the CPP has been expanding and penetrating the state and party structures from the top to the bottom.

Controlling over the state and handling the patronage networks constitute the foundations of control for the CPP. However, since 1993, the CPP also shows an increasing amount of adaptability to the new rules of the game brought in by elections and international community demands. The existing studies, together with this study's empirical evidence, broadly indicate that the CPP firstly has recognized the importance of winning an acceptable election. Secondly, it worked to change its image by resorting less to the violent methods of ruling and winning elections. At the same time, the party

has opted to manipulate and use divide-and-rule and bribing strategies to weaken the already weak Royalists and the newly-emerging SRP.

The CPP's rise has been accompanied by many other political and economic changes, including more stability and security and economic growth. The CPP should be given some credit for these positive changes. However, governance problems such as patronage and corruption are also seen to have accompanied and contributed to its rise. Donors and other societal actors such as NGOs have pushed for various governance reforms, but successes seem to be limited. People, on the other hand, seem to have been passive in exerting demands and pressure on the ruling party to fight the problems of corruption.

The story told in this chapter of the CPP is based mainly on existing Cambodian scholarship. It has been useful in providing a rough picture of this party's journey to dominance. It seems to also confirm the existing literature about dominant party politics (as discussed in Chapter 2) in the sense that all key foundational elements of control such as state control, elite coalition and administrative networks, can be identified along with the CPP's rise, and that over time, the party also shows signs of adaptation to democratic electoral politics, especially in terms of building and maintaining legitimacy.

What the existing literature fails to deliver is a detailed account of how all these events, i.e. control over the state, accommodating elite interests, adapting to the demands of the people and other requirements such as those imposed by the donors, actually took place. In other words, the literature seems to be sufficient in showing the outer features of the 'black box' (i.e. the CPP and its strategies) and how they seem to have changed over time, but it stills shed little light on the inner mechanisms of the box itself. It is the knowledge about such mechanisms, this study argues, that can allow a researcher to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of dominant party politics such as that of the CPP. The subsequent chapters attempt to open the box wider and analyze what lies inside.

Chapter 5: The CPP controlling state budget and strengthening rural administration

This empirical chapter seeks to provide more in-depth understanding of how the CPP has managed to stay dominant. As discussed in Chapter 2, a typical dominant party makes efforts to achieve various objectives, including controlling the state, maintaining elite coalitions and support, establishing administrative networks and building legitimacy among voters. Chapter 4, based mainly on existing literature, suggests that the CPP, since its coming to power in 1979, has worked and learnt how to simultaneously achieve all these objectives. Yet, the chapter still offers little insight on 'how' the Party has actually done it.

This chapter zooms in on the CPP's detailed mechanisms and relationship with the state, the elite, and the mass. It attempts to answer two questions posed in chapter 3:

- How has the CPP managed to use state budget control to accommodate elite interest in exchange for their support? and
- How has the CPP built and strengthened its local administrative networks to control and shape rural voters' perceptions?

To answer the above questions, this chapter uses both secondary and primary data collected from the field. In most cases, the primary data not only confirms but also provides more details on what has already been said in the existing studies. Moreover, it attempts to frame those pieces of empirical evidence using the framework and research design derived in chapters 2 and 3 and aims to better understand the CPP's dominance, rather than just provide descriptive accounts of budgetary reform and rural politics.

What the chapter will show is that under the CPP, budgetary control has remained centralized, and poorly managed. This has allowed high ranking officials at the centre to use the centralized authority for their own self-enrichment, leaving those at the sub-national level with little budgetary authority and thus much less opportunity for similar self-enrichment. At the same time, the party has been aggressively building up its administrative and surveillance networks, and co-opting various forms of traditional institutions and leaders at local level. The result is a system characterized by centralized

budgetary control on the one hand, and a poorly financed, but highly penetrative organizational structure at the local level on the other.

5.1. State budget and budgetary reform – A brief overview

This section and the next focus on the question of budgetary management and reforms and how they relate to the CPP. There are two related questions on this.

- How has the CPP managed state budget and budgetary reform? and
- How does that allow the party to use the budget to accommodate elite interest in exchange for their support?

Since the formation of the 1993 government, with assistance from donors, development plans have been prepared and put into implementation. Those plans were prepared to ensure better service delivery to the people and to meet the requirements imposed by donors⁴⁰. As part of the plan, the government needed to commit to reforming its budgeting system so that it could better mobilize revenue and spend it to achieve development objectives (RGC 2005a).

In Cambodia, as in many other countries, the MEF is charged with the task of budgetary management (RGC 2008a)⁴¹. In 1993, the MEF was headed by the Royalist Finance Minister, Sam Rainsy. Conflict over power sharing between the CPP and the Royalists, together with Royalist internal conflict, led to Sam Rainsy's dismissal in 1994. Since then, the MEF has been controlled by the CPP, i.e. headed by a CPP minister. Also, from those early days, budgetary reform has been on the agenda pushed by donors.

This study argues that the progress of the budgetary reform in Cambodia falls into two different periods: the first from 1994 to 2000, and the other from 2000 up to now (2010). In the first period, the political competition between the CPP and the Royalists

⁴⁰ In 1994, Cambodia adopted the first Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP I, 1996-2000), outlining what needed to be achieved by 2000 and the resources, both domestic and external financing, required. It then adopted SEDP II for the period from 2001-2005. In addition, the Cambodian government, in line with the global initiative of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also developed its own CMDGs, focusing on poverty reduction and human development. More recently, the RGC adopted the National Strategic Development Plan for 2006-2010, emphasizing the importance of improving people's living standards and better public service delivery.

⁴¹ Article 37 of 2008 Public Finance Law

was still prominent, while in the second, the CPP was already on the rise to its dominance and becoming increasingly secure in its power seat.

From 1994 to 2000, Public Financial Management (PFM) reform had not received much attention although institutional weaknesses were identified in almost all areas ranging from revenue mobilization to oversight and audit (World Bank 1999). On the revenue side, the RGC adopted the Law on Taxation only in 1997. Trying to attract FDI, the government at the time was granting tax holidays in almost every sector, making the overall revenue low. Taxation administration had been particularly weak, leading to low tax revenue. Domestic revenue in 1998 was 8% of GDP, about half of the average for low income countries. Had the tax and customs collection capacity been higher, Cambodia would have collected about two-thirds more of the actual revenue at the time (World Bank 1999:iii-iv).

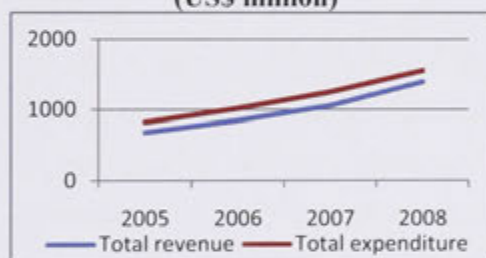
Another challenge was the revenue loss from forestry exploitation. During the 1990s, illegal logging was happening at an alarming rate in Cambodia. It was estimated that illegal logging in 1997 alone totaled around three to four million cubic meters, that is, three to eight times higher than the level considered sustainable. In the same year, the government was said to have lost about US\$60 million from illegal logging, equivalent to about 2 % of GDP (World Bank 1999). Corruption in the forestry sector was rampant, often involving military, police and other vested interests (Cock 2007). Other non-tax revenues (e.g. passport and visa fees, profits from state owned enterprises, public land sales) were not monitored transparently either. These revenues were collected and partly spent by line ministries, without fully depositing it in the Treasury. Although revenue retention was supposed to be a good incentive for line ministries to perform, the problem then was that it was collected and used without transparency (World Bank 1999).

Some recommendations were provided by donors on how to improve the budget, but these only led to minor changes. The main reason, some argue, was that at the time, the CPP and Royalists were more occupied with competing to control the state, and thus did not give budget reform high priority (Taliercio 2008). The CPP in particular was managing state resources to strengthen rather than weaken its own patronage-networks,

and to cement its political control, rather than to enhance service delivery efficiency⁴² (Taliencio 2008). I agree with this argument, based on my overall hypothesis that the ruling party would not consider reforms if they appeared to threaten its patronage and elite coalitions, which is considered as its key power base.

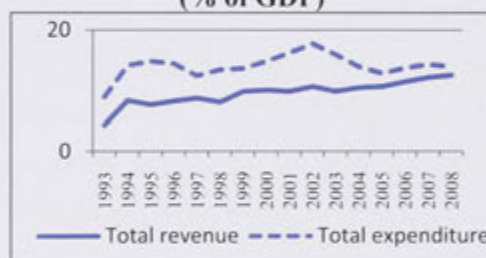
From 2000 onwards, donors were pushing harder for budget reform. First, they introduced a technical assistance project called Technical Cooperation Assistance Program (TCAP) in mid-2001. The program lasted for 2 and a half year, using USD 6.7 million worth of technical assistance and training and relatively high salary supplement for a small group of MEF officials. TCAP achieved very little, however (Taliencio 2008). Problems including lack of political will, non-functioning civil service, and politicization of the bureaucracy were all raised by donors as the main causes (IMF 2004b). Based on the experience of the TCAP, a more integrated budgetary reform was introduced by the government, with the support of donors, in 2004 (RGC 2004).

Figure 7: Revenue and expenditure (US\$ million)



Source: ADB 2009

Figure 8: Revenue and expenditure (% of GDP)



Source: ADB 2009

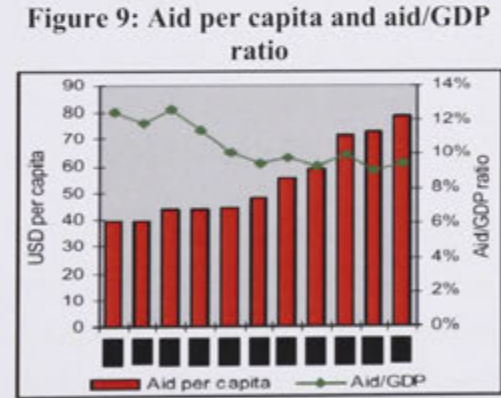
As of 2008, positive changes have been made on various fronts. Total revenue which stood at 4.3 % of GDP in 1993, rose up to 9.8 % in 2003 and 12.5 % in 2008; more public spending was allocated away from defense and security to social sectors, especially education and health (ADB 2009). Overall, the progress with budgetary reform was rated as 'satisfactory' by the IMF report (IMF 2009a). This progress, some argue, are the result of the CPP's developing a higher sense of ownership over the reform program, as well as the donors' being more coordinated and cooperating with the government (Taliencio 2008). While agreeing to both of these propositions, this study further argues that the CPP became active in the reforms partly to gain further support from donors and partly because it has become more secure in its dominance

⁴² Some government officials (quoted in Taliencio 2008) argue that, although what they did was not helpful for service delivery, it was helpful for stability and security.

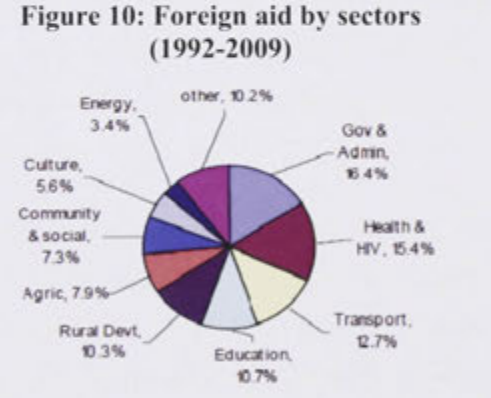
and therefore could focus more on the reform and less on political competition with the opposition parties.

Despite recent progress, comparatively, though, Cambodia’s budgetary performance is still very weak, even by low income country standards. An assessment done in 2007 by the IMF indicated that it had passed only 5 out of 16 points intended for a good budgetary system. This is even lower than the average of low income countries which usually met 6 to 7 of the points (IMF 2007). Tax revenue, although increasing from 8.0% of GDP in 1998 to 9.9% in 2008, is still lower than the regional level (which stood at 12 to 16 % in 2006) (IMF 2007; IMF 2009b). Corruption is still a big problem in tax collection, attributed largely to the low government official salaries, smuggling, inequitable application of the tax system (depending on who the owners are) and the culture of intervention to acquire tax exemption (IMF 2007).

The issue of foreign aid is also important in the Cambodian budget. From 1992 to 2009, Cambodia received US\$9.79 billion in foreign aid. As the figure 9 below shows, not only has the absolute amount of aid been increasing, but its per capita amount has also risen, from just US\$ 40 in 2000 to about US\$80 in 2010. This is more or less the same as the government revenue per capita, which amounted to about US\$75 in 2008. With the fast growing economy, though, foreign aid as percentage of GDP has been decreasing, from around 12% to less than 10 % in the last ten years (RGC 2010a).



Source: RGC 2010a



Source: RGC 2010a

Foreign aid to Cambodia has come from both bilateral and multi-lateral donors. Summing up the period from 1992 to 2009, Japan stands as the biggest bilateral donors. Support from the World Bank, ADB, and other international NGOs has also been

significant. This aid has been spent on various sectors, with health, transport, education, rural development and agriculture receiving the highest share (RGC 2010a). NGOs have been particularly active in the social sectors. In health alone, there has been more than 130 service delivery NGOs collaborating with the Ministry of Health (Pak 2009b).

In response to the institutional weaknesses of the government's budgetary system, donors opted to create numerous parallel project implemented units (PIUs) and initiate salary supplementation for government staff who worked in donor projects. All these actions constitute the commonly known aid problems, namely, aid alignment, ownership and coordination (Taliercio 2008). Donor preference for using a parallel system was also among the key motives to create a separation between annual budget and the so-called Public Investment Program (PIP) (Schiavo-Campo and Tommasi 1999). This led to persistent separation between recurrent and development budget in Cambodia (Pak and Craig 2008). Since 1994, a rough picture of that separation remains: the national revenue mobilized is only a little more than enough to cover recurrent spending, leaving about 70% of the development budget to be financed by the donors (Pak and Craig 2008). Thus, it appears as if Cambodia's development has been pretty much run by donors.

5.2. The CPP, patrimonialism, and the budget

After the brief discussion regarding Cambodia's budget and its reform, this section focuses on how the CPP has managed to use budget control to accommodate elite interest in exchange for their support. Three important issues, this section argues, relate directly to this question. They are (i) the patrimonial practice within the state, (ii) budget centralization, and (iii) budget fragmentation.

In Cambodia today, patrimonial practice is very widespread and systemic, making the state in this country a neo-patrimonial one. The party and the state are hardly distinguishable, and this situation has become even more so as the CPP becomes more dominant. For instance, it was learnt that the CPP strictly requires that public officials must be CPP members, or they were not treated favorably. This is true not only at the central, but also (or even more so) at the provincial and district levels (Pak and Craig 2008). Data collected during the fieldwork confirm that within each ministry, the minister and key department heads are also key officials within the CPP's central committees.

Another blurred distinction is that between the bureaucratic and political spheres. Controlling the state apparatus, and through that, demanding loyalty from bureaucrats is central to the CPP control. Since 1993, the CPP has been very careful, persistently refusing to allow the opposition parties (the Royalists in particular) to share bureaucratic control. This refusal handicapped the Royalists even in ministries with Royalist ministers. This is because the key bureaucrats there (i.e. Director General and department directors) did not obey anyone but only those from the CPP.

The CPP not only formally controls, but has also allows and nourishes its own patronage networks to penetrate the state's bureaucracy. The result is the lack of separation between the personal and public sphere, a key attribute of a neo-patrimonial state. The use of administrative positions among state employees engaging jointly or individually in economic activities in which the abuse of their position constitute the profitable element has been common (Hughes 2003; Calavan et al. 2004). The mutually beneficial relationships embedded within the patronage has given rise to a strong and cohesive, but informal, state apparatus, making it politically challenging to discipline any questionable entrepreneurial activities of state officials (Hughes and Conway 2004).

Because patronage and its rent-seeking has become so widespread and mixed with politics, and because the CPP itself has become increasingly dominant, various powerful patrons have created and presided over their own domains. For instance, it is observed that each ministry is to a large extent like a domain presided over by the minister who is like a patron. The resourcefulness of the domains, this study observes, can be represented quite fairly by the scope of the resources and authorities vested in the formal authority of the ministries. For instance, Ministries of Finance, of Interior, of Agriculture (especially Department of Forestry, and of Fishery), the police, and the military tend to be much more resourceful than, say, Ministry of Education, Health, etc. The resourcefulness⁴³ of a domain is in parallel with that of the patrons or key people dominating it. This observation is consistent with findings by Hughes and Conway (2004), and of the Corruption Perception Assessment (Nissen 2005).

These different patrons, while tied together in an upward line towards a more powerful patron (taking a shape of a pyramid), also compete and protect their interests from one

⁴³ In the following chapters, this notion of resourcefulness is particularly helpful for this study in its assessment of the resourcefulness of the Party Working Group (PWG) whose heads are usually resourceful government officials.

another. Such competition has made the central government hardly a homogenous entity. At central level, competing interests exist not only among ministries but also sections and departments with the same ministry. And what is even more interesting to note is that such conflict is not driven by so-called bureaucratic interests as often projected in the first world's bureaucracy (Brinkeroff and Goldsmith 2002), but by much more personal and patronage-based interests.

In budgetary matters, such patronage is even more common. However, when talking about budgets, this study argues that it is important to look at two other important aspects: budget centralization and budget fragmentation. Centralization is the first and most persistent feature of Cambodia's current budgeting system. After the formation of the 1993 government, budgetary authority was centralized under the MEF (RGC 1993). This centralization was necessary at the early stage of reconstruction of a post-conflict country like Cambodia (IMF 2004a). But there were also political motives for it. For the Royalists who won the election at the time, centralizing budgetary power under the MEF was in its favor, because the ministry was headed by its own minister. For the CPP, budgetary centralization was acceptable partly because it helped address the problem of overly-autonomous provincial people who in the period prior to 1993 were collecting, but not reporting nor sending revenues to the centre (Gottesman 2003).

After the ousting of the Royalist finance Minister in 1994, however, the CPP came to control the MEF. Centralization since then has been strengthened, giving increasing power to the MEF. The MEF people since then have had the most say from annual budget allocation, execution and oversight. This, formally, is not exceptional for a finance ministry. The challenges, however, came from the fact that, centralization, rather than being used to ensure fiscal discipline, has been used to create gate-keeping and opportunities to demand informal payments (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2003; Pak and Craig 2008).

This study learnt that every year, when line agencies prepare their budgets, they have to negotiate with the MEF. It is well known that these negotiations involved a lot of informality and under-the-table deals. When the budget is executed, following the pre-audit approach, line ministries are required to ask for approval from the MEF and its financial controller before spending allocated budget. MEF also controls most of the

procurement works⁴⁴. Such centralization makes it hard for some line agencies such as education and health to spend their own budgets, partly because the rigid spending procedures.⁴⁵

Over-centralization is also evident across tiers of administration. The 1993 reform significantly stripped provincial, district, and commune levels of their budgetary authority and resource. It was not until 1998 that some budgetary powers were given back, allowing the provincial level mostly recurrent budgets, and a very small provincial development budget (RGC 1998). Under this set-up, provincial and district governors were reduced to only delegated officials of the Ministry of Interior (MoI 1994). Even after the decentralization reform, started in 2002, which created an unconditional transfer known as the Commune/Sangkat Fund (CSF) for communes, budgetary control is still kept centrally. As Table 4 below shows, provincial/district and commune administration budget altogether accounted for only about 6% from 2008 to 2010. Even after adding up provincial vertical line department budget, the percentage goes up to only about 20% for the three years.

Table 4: Intergovernmental budgetary allocation (Million Riels)

	2008	2009	2010
(1) Total national spending	5,573,383	7,259,566	8,299,773
(2) Provincial spending	206,776	356,950	326,370
(3) CSF from national budget	91,000	107,000	142,424
(2+3)/(1)	5.34%	6.39%	5.65%
(4) Provincial line dept budget	857,645	1,059,122	1,209,431
((2) + (3) + (4)) / (1)	20.73%	20.98%	20.22%

Sources: RGC 2008c, 2009, 2010b

State control reflects elite control (see chapter 2 on the concept of elite and patronage network), this study argues. Centralization of budgetary authority therefore implies that the central elite, rather than those at sub-national level, have had more opportunity for rent-seeking and benefiting personally from the state budget. If the elite coalition constitutes a significant part of the CPP's power base, from the current pattern of

⁴⁴ As expected, procurement, when non-transparently carried out, can be a big source of corruption. It was learnt, for instance, that the price of standard A4 paper procured through a MEF-system could be 30 to 60% higher than the retail market price. Recently, the MEF started to de-concentrate more procurement authority to line ministries. Budget oversight and auditing have also been under the authority of the MEF. And, very often, auditing, which is supposed to be a control mechanism, has become just another opportunity for money-making by covering up non-compliance (World Bank 2005; IMF 2009a)

⁴⁵ The author's personal experience working with (not for) both ministries from 2003 through 2009

resource control, it also means that for the CPP, the elite refers mainly to the 'central' elite, i.e. those with positions within the central government.⁴⁶

Because fewer opportunities for self enrichment are given to party officials at the sub-national level, this study argues that, although local base is important for the CPP, that base has not been well financially supported and incentivized. Lately, there have also been more complaints from the local party officials about this incentive issue. Commune councilors, for instance, complain about their low salaries (about US\$16 to US\$25 per month) and those of their village chiefs (about US\$10 per month)⁴⁷, saying that what they get is not commensurate with their services to the party and the government⁴⁸.

The budgetary reform in 1994 gave rise to another persistent budgetary problem: budget fragmentation, especially in relation to the non-tax revenue collection. While the 1993 Budget Law requires that all revenue and expenditures need to be captured under one budget (the principle of 'unity'), much of the non-tax revenue was kept outside the reach of the MEF and the Treasury. As discussed earlier, various line ministries have been collecting revenue from whatever resources placed under their jurisdiction. As a result of this fragmentation, hundreds of accounts were created under the names of these various line ministries. More importantly, these accounts are not linked and reported to the Treasury. Moves have been made to eliminate these accounts and integrate them under the normal budgeting regulations and single treasury account, but little progress has been made on this so far (RGC 2007).

This study further contends that eliminating such outside-the-budget accounts will be difficult because it would effectively mean undermining the entrenched 'domains of power' of other key elite networks besides the MEF. In a way, this study sees that budgetary fragmentation serves the purpose of rent-sharing which helps maintain the (central) elite coalition in serving the interests of the CPP. Fragmentation of revenue collection means multiple domains are being created, each placed under different elite

⁴⁶ This logical inference is confirmed by a recent study which found that basically, sub-national level officials, be them provincial governors or heads of line departments, had heavily relied on, and thus needed to build good relationships with, people at the central, especially those at the MEF (Pak and Craig 2008).

⁴⁷ These figures of commune and village salary are based on the fieldwork interviews, April to June 2008. Recently, the salary for the commune councilors is increased to US\$37 for commune chief and US\$24 for councilors, US\$15 for village chiefs, and US\$10 for village authority members (RGC 2010d).

⁴⁸ Commune Councilors 5th Seminar, Kampong Cham, December 21-22, 2009

groups. In addition to that, to reduce conflict, it was important that the CPP leadership create an informal rule or understanding which would prevent people from encroaching upon other elites' interests and make those people feel secure as long as they are still part of the party.

Fragmentation of resource control might also serve the interest of the CPP leadership, for it helps ensure that at any time, there is no single elite (whether ministers, military officers or governors) that could become strong enough to be a challenger. For instance, although the Ministry of Finance is said to be the most powerful ministry, it does not hold a monopoly over state resources. The party leaders, when in financial needs, can always reach out to other line agencies such as agriculture, mines and industries, and the various autonomous agencies which have been created to control revenue from other sources such as tourism and natural resource royalties. This way, the elite group immediately under the leadership level appears to act as countervailing forces preventing one another from becoming too strong. This, of course, is good for the stability and security of those in the higher leadership ranks.

However, this does not mean that those within the elite group do not compete to build up and expand their power and domain. From my experience working and sharing information with government officials, there have often been rumors about ambitious individuals bribing and fighting to get certain 'fat' posts which are currently held by another ambitious person. Such competition exists not only within the same, but also cross-ministries. From time to time, for instance, there have been rumors about a senior officer from the Ministry of Interior maneuvering to get a post in the Minister of Justice, or a high ranking official from Ministry of Commerce wanting to put more money into the pipeline to 'kick out' a guy in the Finance. Some recent studies also point to the existence of such intra-elite competition (Cock 2010).

My interviews with party officials⁴⁹ confirm that such conflicts do happen, and when they did, depending on the seriousness of the problem, the party jumps in to ease the tensions. In the same interviews, I learnt that the most active person in conflict resolution is the current Secretary General who is well-known for his modesty, integrity

⁴⁹ Fieldwork interviews, provincial party official, July 06, 2008

and seniority. Of course, the final say on high profile conflicts rests with the top leaders, particularly the Prime Minister and the Party President, Chea Sim⁵⁰.

Another explanation for the CPP's effective management of conflict among its own people is that, owing in large part to the impressive economic growth in the last decade, more wealth has been created, allowing more room for more peaceful rent accumulation and extraction, and less need to collide. Part of these available rents come from natural resource exploitation, starting with forestry, then fishery, and more recently, land (Cock 2010). From the study's observations, however, this does not mean all the people are equally happy with the rent-sharing. Yet, who wants to rock the boat especially when there is no other boats as big as the CPP floating around? Or, like the CPP people often said, *'who would want to leave a villa to stay in a hut?'* (quoted in Pak and Craig 2008).

The CPP leadership, on the one hand, knows that it cannot appease all of its elites. On the other hand, it has also been cautious about not causing unnecessary resentment among them. That caution is reflected in the Party's (and the government's) tendency to avoid dismissing any party (government) officials who become less useful or not fully supportive or obeying the leadership. Kicking them upstairs, or 'creating a box for them', as it is commonly known, has been the preferred option. This option is also used to avoid a situation where there is 'a worm coming out of your own flesh', a phrase referring to a time when a former party member talks about party scandals after being let go. Creating them a box, supported by proper titles and a certain amount of financial support is a strategy that has been repeatedly used by the CPP. The result has been the ever-increasing size of the cabinet, and more people promoted but with no specific authority within the politicized bureaucracy⁵¹.

Another interesting point about the CPP is its own financial management and regulation. For a 2003 report, the Secretary General of the CPP was interviewed and asked about the party budget. First, the Secretary General asserted that the CPP is not a wealthy party. When still a socialist party, he continued, the Party could use the state budget for its own purposes. But it could no longer do that after 1993 (Kovick and Emling 2003). He continued that now, the sources of the CPP financing are: funds from

⁵⁰ Fieldwork interviews, June 6, 2008

⁵¹ *Neak Chea Bulletin*, No 304, Year 15, August 2008

party officials 'according to their status,' personal contributions from party members and supporters, legal business operations of the Party, property owned by the Party, and other forms of charities. The party has two committees that control funds and expenditure: the Permanent Control Committee and the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission reports on the party's financial accounts and business holdings to the party's Central Committee. Party financial information is not made available to members of the party, or to the public (Kovick and Emling 2003).

The response provided by the Secretary General is a literal reading of the Statute of the CPP (CPP 1997). It is noted that since 1997, the Party has not made changes to its Statute, however. And by just quoting the formal Statute, the Secretary General does not tell much about the real 'budget' that the party has. In reality, this study argues (and as later chapters will show), the CPP's budget goes beyond just the formal contributions of its members and the assets it owns. The state budget and all the resources under its authority, as well as the wealth accumulated by its elites (especially those at the central level) can all be considered a reserve pool saved for the party's needs.

To sum up, while it also has a formal budget, the CPP's real resources come directly from its control over the state and state budget. This control is exerted through its vast and ever-expanding patrimonial practice which penetrates the state apparatus to such an extent that is comparable to a neo-patrimonial state. As far as the budget is concerned, the CPP appears to accommodate more the interests of the central elite, and uses budgetary fragmentation to allow the different factions of the central elite to benefit from the state. What is seen then is a kind of intra-party vertical fiscal imbalance where party members at district, district and commune level – who are like the 'foot soldiers' of the CPP – have received much less financial rewards and fewer opportunities for rent-seeking. So, what does this mean for the CPP's sub-national and local administration? Has it been weak because there have not been many resources given? And if so, how can the CPP manage to stay dominant? These questions are addressed in the next section.

5.3. The CPP and its rural administrative networks

This section focuses on the two questions posed in chapter 3:

- How has the CPP built its administrative capacity in rural areas? And
- How has the party sought to influence rural people's perceptions and ensure their votes?

Before focusing on its local administration, this section begins with a description of the overall organizational structure of the CPP. The 1997 Statute is the key formal document outlining the organizational structure and relevant procedures of the party. According to the Statute, the highest body of the party is the Party congress which meets every five years. The congress elects the members to the Central Committee, which then elects the chair, vice-chair, honorary chair, and members of the Permanent Committee (CPP 1997). As of 2003, it was reported that the CPP has 75 members in its Central Committee, and 19 in the Permanent Committee (Kovick and Emling 2003). From this study's fieldwork, the number has increased to 232 for the Central Committee, and 35 for the Permanent Committee (CPP 2009). It is not known why such a dramatic increase has occurred.

Organizationally, the party is divided into four levels: central, provincial and ministerial, district and grassroots (CPP 1997). From provincial level downward, this study found that, in parallel to each level of state administration is the party branch. It is common that provincial and district governors, as well as commune chiefs are heads of the respective levels of party branches. The CPP, it was also learnt, has been vigorous in recruiting new members. To be a member, a person needs to be 18 years of age or older. As of 2010, the CPP report to have almost 5.3 million members countrywide, 50.43% of who are female (CPP 2010). It is important to note that being a member of the CPP does not mean the person actually vote for the party. For instance, the CPP in 2008 elections got only about 3.5 million votes, equivalent to about 65% of the above membership size (CPP 2008a).

Grassroots administrative network is a key strength of the CPP. By grassroots, I mean commune, village and group level. Before the commune election in 2002, all commune chiefs were CPP-appointed officials who were usually the heads of the Party's respective commune branches. After the 2002 commune election, the situation did not change much because the CPP won 98.6% of the chief positions (see chapter 8 for more on decentralization).

The village level, until now, has been controlled by a CPP-appointed village chief, a deputy chief and an assistant. Below the village is a 'group' level, which is like a sub-village unit, each has from eight to twelve households. The head of the group is responsible for making sure that the current CPP households keep supporting the party, and convincing the non-CPP ones to become CPP's supporters. Having been in power and staying close to local level since, the CPP is also said to be much more advanced compared to the Royalists and the SRP in recruiting 'active and popular people' to work in its administrative networks⁵².

Except for the commune chiefs and councilors who are paid about US\$16 to US\$25 per month, and village chief who received about US\$10 from the government⁵³, all the CPP activists, especially the heads of the groups, are not entitled to any formal salary. The only occasional support, in cash or in-kinds, they receive is given by central party officials who come down to visit their localities.

Without real financial support, it is hard to comprehend why those activists are committed to the party. However, anecdotal evidence collected during fieldwork suggest that a mix of motives is involved, including: desire to build an image and influence among their local peers, opportunities to be connected with party officials from the central level, genuine affection and gratitude to the CPP for saving them from the Khmer Rouge's genocide⁵⁴. The above observation leads this study to argue that, to really understand the CPP's operation at the local level, it is important to look also at other non-financial factors that help the party operate at that level.

Because the ultimate objective is to win votes from the people, it is also important to understand better the characteristics of Cambodian voters, especially about their perceptions about those in state authority positions. As of 2008, about 80 % of the eligible voters (18 years or older) were older than 30 year old (NIS 2009). This means people who had been eligible to vote were pre-dominantly those who had lived through wars and the period of desperation. These periods give the Cambodian people a very terrifying image of state 'authority.' Although throughout history, until Cambodia

⁵² Fieldwork interviews, March 26, 31, 2010

⁵³ These figures of commune and village salary are based on the fieldwork interviews, April to June 2008. Recently, the salary for the commune councilors is increased to US\$37 for commune chief and US\$24 for councilors, US\$15 for village chiefs, and US\$10 for village authority members (RGC 2010d).

⁵⁴ Results from the fieldwork interviews with local party officials

gained independence from France, the Cambodia people had been largely passive in their roles as citizenry, and although certain forms of suppression were present during the colonial time, village life before 1970 was rather peaceful (Ebihara 1968).

War from the 1970s to the 1990s changed all these peaceful elements in people's minds, memories and landscapes. The civil war, the coup that ousted King Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge's horror have been too much for any generation to bear, or at least to stay survive without having their psyches affected and social cohesion impaired (Chandler 2008). While people in democratic countries are talking about holding their governments accountable, Cambodian people who have been through such a horrifying experience would already feel grateful if the state just leaves them and their families alone.

Going through more than 30 years of war and unrest, however, does not mean that certain social values and patterns that existed before the war all evaporated. Religion, hierarchical notion within society, patronage, and other traditional values still persist and/or have been actively re-created. Such persistence is particularly noticeable in the countryside, where economic development and modernization have been limited, and where the large majority of voters reside⁵⁵ (about 80 % (CPP 2008a)).

Existing Cambodian scholarship provides an insightful account of decision-making in rural Cambodia. First of all, patronage customs are central to relationships among rural Cambodians (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). These relationships are not fixed, but driven by constant negotiation between a patron and his clients, and like the usual patronage practices, it involves exchanges, protection and benefits from the patrons, and support from the clients (Maston 1997). Cambodian people cannot live without patrons. He or she needs 'someone behind' them (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). Traditionally, the patrons were also fellow farmers. However, with the administrative presence of the state and economic activity expansion, there have been more forms of patronage whose networks and influence exist beyond a village.

⁵⁵ This study focuses on rural politics, however, does not mean urban politics is not important. On the contrary, urban politics is very important as far as regime change is concerned. In many countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, regimes changes often came as a result of urban people going out to protest with the incumbent rulers (Case 2002). However, such urban riots, while also happening in Cambodia in the last ten years (Hughes 2009), has not really shaken up the power base of the CPP. In other words, rural politics is still a key factor shaping national politics in Cambodia, and therefore, should deserve more attention in this thesis.

These patrons can be grouped into 'domains' (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). The first is the administrative domain, which comprises people who hold formal authority such as village, commune, district and provincial officials. Second is the religious domain, referring mainly to both monks residing in pagodas, and the members of pagoda committees which serve more or less like as the executive branches of the *sangha*. Third refers to the knowledge domain which includes teachers, nurses, traditional birth attendants, and traditional (or even spiritual) healers. The fourth refers to local rich people, and the fifth to the development assistance domain. This last domain became noticeable after 1993 with the influx of aid money which was translated into public services through the ever-increasing number of community-based NGOs (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002).

Patrons from these domains play a key role in shaping people's perceptions about public decisions, and most relevant, about who to vote for. That is why they are called 'heads of the wind' (*mekhjal*). Such perception-shaping influence, from my observation, is strongest in the case of the village chiefs (given that they are the closest to the people), and the pagoda-related people (given their moral authority). The *sangha* is an important force making patronage relationships within Cambodian village not only instrumental but also moral to some extent. Merit making and benevolence for instance, are prominent in people's thinking (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002). My fieldwork interviews and observations also show that, despite all the positive and the negative things that have happened in the last 30 or 40 years, Buddhism is still influential, especially in the minds of those 50 years or older.

The influence of Buddhism in Cambodian people's mind was evident through the zeal with which the people were working to restore this traditional institution right after the demise of the Khmer Rouge. Before the Khmer Rouge (1975), there were about 88,000 monks and around 3,500 serving monasteries for a population of about seven million. The Khmer Rouge gave the religion horrible treatment, calling monks 'leeches,' demolishing numerous pagodas (there is no statistics on this), and turning many of them into prisons. Only two years after the Khmer Rouge, though, with the Cambodian people contribution, about 700 of the monasteries were restored, and were quickly filled with hundred of monks (Kent 2003).

Now with a population of about 13 million, Cambodia has about 4,400 pagodas and 56,000 monks (CPP 2008c). As the next chapter will show, a lot of resources have been spent on building pagodas, some of which look very luxurious. Contribution comes not only from wealthy believers, but from the local poor as well. As one commune chief vividly describes, 'Our people, especially the elderly, might think twice before giving contribution to schools, but they would walk the distance across rice fields to pagodas with their rice bowls carried on their heads as contributions for merit-makings,'⁵⁶

Compared to the Royalists and the SRP, the CPP seems to be very knowledgeable about these characteristics of the rural Cambodian voters. A number of points are relevant here. First, the CPP also has an interesting 'demographic characteristic' which gives it a big edge compared to the opposition and the Royalists when it comes to dealing with rural people: the CPP's elites themselves, predominantly, used to be peasants or at least have peasantry roots (Hughes and Conway 2004). My fieldwork confirms that these elites still keep regular contact, in one form or another, with their kin from the village. Plus, among these party people, there is still a strong sense of 'place of origin,' i.e. their (or their parents' and spouses') places of birth, or places where they had particular memories and affiliations (e.g. during wartime). This characteristic makes the CPP a real people's party in the sense they know the people well – at least, comparatively.

Second, understanding the importance of the *mekhjal* (heads of the wind), the CPP has sought to control and co-opt them. First, the party has sought to control the administrative domain by ensuring that its people control state apparatus from provincial down to village level (Pak and Craig 2008). Among these sub-national people, the village authority plays a very important role linking the party to the people. Besides voter mobilization and surveillance, the village authority is the transmitter through which information from the centre is led down to the people (e.g. on how good the CPP is at building infrastructure) and back from the villagers to the centre (e.g. on the various tactics used by the opposition to attack the government, and people's concerns and potential threats from it). The CPP's control over the administrative domain is even more dominant, when considering the fact that the party also controls all the local police.

⁵⁶ Fieldwork interview with commune chief, October 20, 2008

The CPP, like many political parties and politicians in previous regimes (Chandler 2008), also seeks to gain support from the *sangha*. When the Royalists were still strong in power, the CPP had to compete hard to win favor among Buddhist-related institutions. But now, with the Royalists out of the way, the CPP seems to be in secure control of this influential source of legitimacy. The head monk at the national level has long been suspected of being pro-CPP (Kent 2003), while many monasteries at the local level have turned one by one to accepting the CPP's patronage.

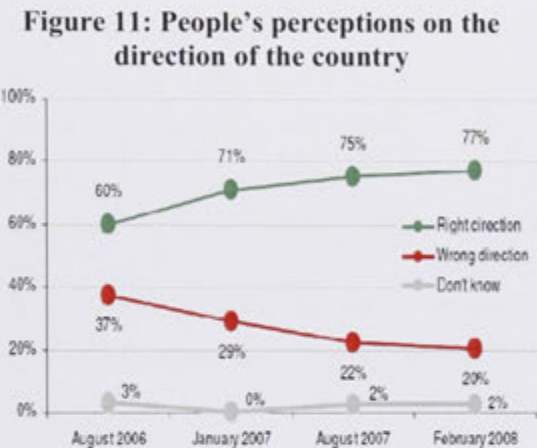
According to the fieldwork, there are usually four to six pagodas in one commune, and it was common for people to know about the persons who come to support the pagodas (i.e. patrons) and their political affiliations. Before, in each commune, there might be three CPP and three Royalist pagodas, or four CPP and two Royalist. But now, it is common that out of the six pagodas, five or all six of them are supported by CPP people. The fieldwork also indicated that the CPP in addition to making large material contributions to the pagoda (see chapters 6 and 7 for more on this), also seeks to co-opt the 'executive branch' of the *sangha*, i.e. the pagoda-committees.

Besides the more hands-on and direct strategies just discussed, the CPP has also been aggressive in using the media – TV and radio in particular – to send out its political messages and shape people's perceptions. Rural people do not usually have access to newspapers, but most of them have a radio and more and more of them have a TV (Malena and Chhim 2009). There are no opposition TV channels, and only a few less pro-government radio broadcast. These few radio-broadcasts have been limited in term of their reach. The only TV and radio channels that are able to reach the most remote areas are the pro-CPP ones. Besides the regular news, social events, and commercial programs, the most noticeable events broadcast by these TV and radio stations is about what the government has done well, and the Prime Minister's speeches⁵⁷.

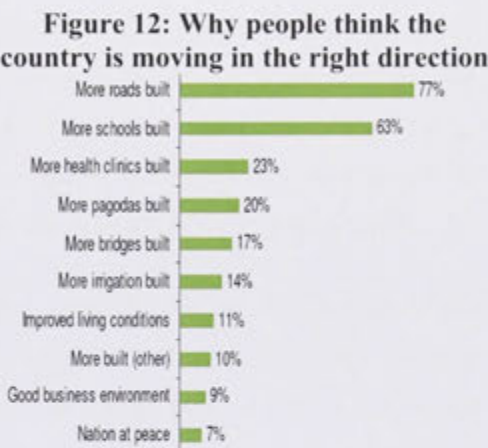
People's perceptions are also the result of the people themselves being rather passive and less demanding of information relating to public affairs (Malena and Chhim 2009). It is not that people do not feel they need to know about what is going on around them. However, what they are interested in are still those matters that can directly and immediately affect their lives – especially about security and health issues (CAS and World Bank 2007).

⁵⁷ Media observations conducted by the author during the period from March to June 2008.

Moreover, partly because of the lack of more subtle and detailed information about the government’s activities, people tend to form their judgments based on what their eyes can actually see. This is confirmed by a recent study which found that a large majority of people in Cambodia (almost 80%) base their judgment that the government is heading in the right direction on the fact that many infrastructure projects had been built (IRI 2008).



Source: IRI 2008



Source: IRI 2008

Besides the CPP, there are also a few other actors who try to make their presence felt at the local level. The first is the opposition. Because the Royalists have almost disappeared altogether, it is more relevant to focus on the SRP. From an interview with high ranking SRP officials, the party now has about 700,000 members nationwide. It has also tried to put in place its organizational structure at all levels, from the central down to the group (sub-village) level⁵⁸. In this respect, it is noted that the SRP actually tries to learn from the CPP by organizing various party wings such as youth and women’s groups. It is hard to assess the efficiency of the SRP’s emerging organizational capacity, but from its electoral result (i.e. from 700,000 votes in 1998 to 1,320,000 in 2008), it is fair to say that it has been working quite well.

In the interview, an SRP official recognized that it has a lot more to do with its organizational building. The biggest challenge thing for the party is its lack of financial resources. It has had a hard time recruiting and incentivizing its people on the ground. Even tougher has been the fact that recently, more of its people have been bought off and defected to the CPP. Facing such challenges the party has become more cautious in

⁵⁸ Fieldwork interview, April 03, 2010

managing its activists, preferring to promote people based on their background and how much of a hardliner he or she has been. Despite all these measures, though, according to NGO people working closely with political parties at the local level, it will be a long time before the SRP can put in place as strong administration network, and attract as many good people, as the CPP has⁵⁹.

With all these constraints, the SRP has been trying to win popular support by picking up on issues most directly affecting people daily lives. From my media observations in 2008 and later on, the SRP has consistently focused on the problems of the high gasoline prices, and more recently, on the issue of land conflicts and land grabbing. Advocacy and human rights NGOs have also joined efforts on these issues. However, they have been less effective in the face of powerful vested interests (Adhoc 2009).

To sum up, the CPP has put a lot of effort into strengthening its local and rural administrative capacity, extending it down to the household level. However, a closer look reveals that this administrative capacity has not been fueled by financial incentives. On the contrary, reflecting the overly-centralized nature of state resources, local party officials have been given little financial reward.

It seems also that the CPP's local administrative capacity comes from its control of other non-financial aspects of rural politics. These include the party's control and co-optation of not only administrative domains, but also the more traditional and informal ones, especially the *sangha* and other so-called 'head of the wind' elements. With such direct controls, together with its control over the media, the CPP has sought to shape people's perceptions. Such shaping has also been the result of the people's general quiescence when it comes to demanding information about public affairs. The people's perceptions are also formed by what they can actually see, particularly infrastructure projects such as roads, schools, canals, and pagodas.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to answer two related questions about the CPP's strategies for dominance.

⁵⁹ Interview with NGOs officials, March 26, April 01, 2010

- How has the CPP managed to use state budget control to accommodate elite interest in exchange for their support? and
- How has the CPP built and strengthened its local administrative networks to control and shape rural voters' perceptions?

To conclude the chapter, the key answers to the questions are as follows. As with the budget, the fact that Cambodia's budgetary system was weak reflects its post-conflict situation: low revenue with a small tax base and a weak administration; high aid-dependency and weak management of spending. Like many other post-conflict countries, one of the key reforms pushed by the donors is on the budget. Very little progress was however made before 2000, mainly because the reform was clouded by the political struggle between the CPP and the Royalists. Since 2000, some progress has been made and rated as satisfactory by some donors. However, the reform has done little to change three important features of Cambodia's budgetary system: the prevalence of patronage, budgetary centralization and fragmentation. These points relate directly to how the CPP seeks to control the state budget and accommodate patronage interests.

Centralization and fragmentation persist because they are the two important strategies used by the CPP not only to help the elite seek rents, but also to ensure rent-sharing and preventing any particular factions or domains from becoming too strong. In ensuring elite coalition and control, the CPP pays much more attention to the elite at the central level, giving its foot soldiers, i.e. party activists at the sub-national and local levels much less budgetary authority, and thus, much less room for rent-seeking. It is still to be seen whether the party sees this vertical imbalance as a problem that needs to be addressed internally.

So why has the CPP still been quite effective in dominating rural politics and ensuring rural votes? The answer is that the CPP's rural administrative machinery has been run not just by financial incentives, but also by other non-monetary factors. Its control over key rural 'domains' of power and 'heads of the wind', is the key. However, people's passiveness in general and the opposition and other civil society's limitations in exerting their influence at that level are also contributing factors.

In the next two chapters, the study will take the analysis of these budgetary issues to another level. This time however, rather than focusing on the formal budgetary system, or the formal administrative networks, the two chapters will look at the off-budget channels which the party has used to raise funds to support rural infrastructure throughout the country. It should be noted that such off-budget support was a key early observation which led this study to focus on the CPP in the first place. One specific argument that will be made and that relates to this chapter is that, under the CPP, the notion of formal, or on-budget, is not that clearly separated from what is informal, or off-budget. The fact that the party is able to bring together and make use of both formal and informal budgetary systems is in itself what makes it so strong and dominant.

Chapter 6: The CPP's off budget support for rural infrastructure projects

This and the next chapter discuss an interesting political strategy of the CPP: its raising and spending of off-budget money to support rural infrastructure projects. The last chapter showed that people (especially those in rural areas) gave high approval to the CPP-led government for the numerous tangible infrastructure projects that were built. It can be said that many of these projects must have been built with state budget and donor money budget. But on top of those financing sources, as already discussed in chapter 4, the CPP and Prime Minister Hun Sen since 1993 have also been increasingly involved in supporting infrastructure projects such as building schools, roads, canals, and pagodas.

From my observation, the support has been given off budget, meaning not through the formal state budget. This chapter and the next seek to understand how the party has done this by answering the following questions (as posed in chapter 3):

- How has the off-budget party support been arranged and given by the CPP?
- What more can we learn from such off-budget party support about the CPP, especially in terms of its relation with the state and the elite/patronage? and
- What have people perceived about this off-budget support and what does it mean for the CPP's legitimization effort?

In answering the above questions, the two chapters rely almost entirely on primary data gathered during my fieldwork in Cambodia in 2008 and early 2009. For many years, the CPP's off budget support has been heard and noticed, but there has not been any systematic study on how this is done. This study is the first to address this gap, providing new empirical findings about the subject.

Moreover, understanding the CPP's off-budget spending does not just serve the purpose of having more empirical data generated. It is also particularly helpful for this study to better understand the CPP's strategies of domination, for it promises to shed new light on the relationship between the party and its elite, the relationship among elites, and the party's views about legitimacy and its relationship with the masses. In other words, understanding the off-budget operations allows this study to look further into the CPP

as ‘a black box.’ In doing that, new insights will also be provided into the relationship between the central and sub-national/local level within the party.

The division between this and the next chapter is as follows. This chapter focuses on discussing the mechanisms by which the off-budget support is arranged, while the next chapter will present more empirical data collected about the type and size of support given, its variation, its correlation to number of votes, people’s perceptions of this practice, and its contribution to rural development. The conclusion for both chapters is presented at the end of Chapter 7.

6.1. Introducing the CPP’s Party Working Group (PWG)

The CPP’s support for rural infrastructure projects has been carried out through a mechanism called the Party Working Group, shortly referred to as PWG. The PWG is a systematic and yet rather shadowy arrangement created in 1993 that exists at national, provincial, district and commune level. The PWG, it should be noted, is not the same as the formal administrative structure of the Party. It is rather like a task force composed of party officials at the different levels. The PWG’s main objective is to mobilize resources from both its members and outside networks and spend that money to ‘take care’ of and ensure votes from the provinces, districts, and communes they are assigned to. The PWG is sometimes referred to by CPP officials as ‘*networks of donators (soboroschun)*’ who make contributions to help rural development.

The PWG and its functioning, this study argues, is like a ‘play’ performed by the CPP for voters, a ‘play’ that brings together many key actors (the CPP leadership, the elites, the masses, the opposition) and many elements (election, finance, administrative, media, personal relationship, religion, and culture). In my media observations during the six months leading to the July 2008 election, it was noticed that *everyday*, about 30 CPP official visits to rural areas were reported. During many of those visits, the officials either promised to build, or inaugurated already built, infrastructure projects in the localities visited.

Prime Minister Hun Sen was probably the most familiar face seen during that period. But it was not just him; many other CPP high ranking officials were also shown on TV and newspapers visiting communes and villages throughout the country. Everywhere they went, the most common line they delivered to the people was that, whatever they

gave to the people today was made possible by the brilliant leadership of the Prime Minister Hun Sen, and with less frequency, of the other two party leaders, Chea Sim and Heng Samrin.

From my observations, as a standard protocol, the officials making such visits were shown accompanied by their entourages who sat behind when the official made speeches. Prime Minister Hun Sen expectedly would have the largest and most high-profile entourage. Sometimes (and almost always for Prime Minister Hun Sen and a few other high ranking officials), to the side of the official entourage was also seen a group of monks who were there to do the blessing for the visiting officials.

Before the visiting officials made their speeches, the local CPP chiefs would read a report on the increasing number of CPP membership in their localities, with particular emphasis on the number of people who had recently defected from the opposition. During the speech, the rural people, some wearing CPP shirts and caps, were shown sitting quite passively listening and clapping their hands when the speech ended. This passiveness, however, is not unique to CPP meetings. People in Cambodia, from what I have observed, do not like to participate when they attend meetings. At the end of each visit – or the ceremonial part of it – the people were shown receiving the standard CPP gift packages, which include some cash (\$1.5 to \$2.5), some rice, a sarong, and monosodium glutamate (MSG). It is the responsibility of local authorities, police included, to arrange the ceremonies.

The PWG support practice is very well known throughout Cambodia. Prime Minister Hun Sen, who is known to lead the movement, has developed a catch phrase for himself: wherever he went, people would make requests for support; he would read out such requests, and when he agreed, which was usually the case, he would claim, with a slightly joking tone, '*Choun tam samnom-por*' (meaning, 'granted as requested'). After the 'granting as the people wish,' sometime, he would turn back to his entourage, giving project so and so to be taken care of by Mr A, and so and so by Mr B. Mr A and Mr. B would stand up, smiling and showing respect, and happily agree to the 'taking care' responsibility. To them, it was a very prestigious – or powerful, to be more accurate – thing to be asked (or, commanded by) the Prime Minister to do PWG work.

The scenes just described are common knowledge for Cambodian people. The ‘play’ has been going on for more than a decade, and yet there has not been any systematic study on it and that is why, in this study, an empirical data collection is conducted to fill in this gap. However, the PWG support and functioning are interesting to study not just because they have not been well studied. More important than that, the PWG is a political play which, if well understood, can serve as a unique window into which the CPP – a political black box, as Hughes (2009) calls it, can be better understood. The following are some of the rationales why the PWG is very important and relevant.

First, the CPP and its leadership have increasingly relied on the PWG functioning and supports as part of the soft strategy for building its development-friendly image and winning the sympathy from the people. The CPP posters that dot the surface of the country show the CPP and its three leaders, alongside schools, roads, pagodas and other infrastructure projects, with a message that says: voting for the CPP, people will get infrastructure projects and development. As this study shows, that message seems to have got through to people’s mind, the end result of which is the CPP controlling more than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats in 2008. After the 2008 election, according to TV broadcasts and CPP website, the PWG activities still continued, although with much less intensity compared to the period before the election⁶⁰.

Second, as will be elaborated shortly, the PWG is like a massive personal network divided into provincial, district and commune level. With that functioning logic, the PWG is like an evolved and expanded version of the patronage networks adapted to serve electoral purposes. Chapters 4 and 5 have already discussed the patronage networks in Cambodia, and their relationship with the state and the Party. Thus, the PWG is a good case through which the evolution of the patronage can be studied in relation to electoral politics.

Third, some recent developments indicate that what has been used by the PWG (i.e. reliance on personal networks and contribution to address development issues) has become not just the CPP’s strategy to win votes and change its political image; it has actually become a kind of proven political philosophy and pragmatism favored by the Party and Prime Minister Hun Sen.

⁶⁰ The website address of the CPP is <http://www.thecpp.org/>

Figure 13: The CPP's political 'plays'



This is a typical CPP ceremonial set up. On the podium is the Prime Minister. Behind him is his entourage, with the monks sitting on the right side⁶¹.



A chain smoker, Prime Minister Hun Sen is shown here at one of hundreds of CPP ceremonies during a rural visit. Behind him are the Minister of Interior (on the right) and Minister of Finance (on the left)⁶².



A head of a PWG is shown inaugurating a school. Behind him are CPP officials⁶³.



The Prime Minister has been trying to portray himself as a man for rural development. Here he is shown helping people in their rice field⁶⁴.



A PWG head is shown distributing gifts to the disabled and senior people in a commune. This practice is very common throughout Cambodia⁶⁵.



Giving medals to significant contributors to PWG is a common practice. Here, the Prime Minister is shown giving a medal to Mong Rithy, a business tycoon and a senator⁶⁶.

⁶¹ Source: <http://preahvihear.com/?p=1448>

⁶² Source: <http://unitedkhmer.wordpress.com/author/unitedkhmer/page/13/>

⁶³ Source: <http://www.cpp.org.kh/category.php?cat=1&pos=13>

⁶⁴ Sources: <http://ki-media.blogspot.com/2008/08/hun-sen-almost-authentic-prime-minister.html>

⁶⁵ Sources: <http://www.cpp.org.kh/category.php?cat=1&pos=7>

⁶⁶ Source: <http://ki-media.blogspot.com/2007/06/cpp-tycoon-senator-mong-reththys-shady.html>

The recent diplomatic row with Thailand over border disputes is a good example of how the PWG logic has been applied beyond electoral politics. Since 2008, Cambodia-Thailand relationships have worsened because of a disagreement over an area around Preah Vihea temple located along the border (Thayer 2009). The content of the dispute is beyond the scope of this study. However, what relevant is my observation that, as a way to respond to the crisis, and to show that everyone is behind the government and the Prime Minister on this 'matter of national interest', all the central ministerial agencies had had fund-raising events in order to support the soldiers standing by in the dispute areas.

This movement is very familiar to the PWG practice in the sense that the money was raised *partly* based on personal networks and each ministry has to take turns to visit the disputed area to show their active involvement in the issue. And like the PWG, each of such visits was broadcast on TV⁶⁷. In this most-publicized conflicts with Thailand, the opposition parties, with no power and, more importantly, no money, have been left out almost completely from Cambodian politics. This conflict, as far as the fundraising went, indicates the belief of the CPP and its leadership in the effectiveness of personal-network fundraising to address national matters, while at the same time, further building their (the Party and its leadership) profiles, and make the opposition irrelevant.

6.2. PWG arrangement

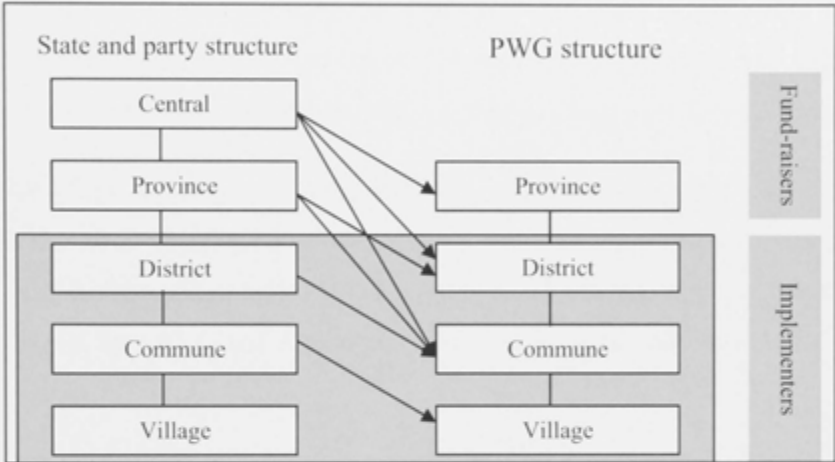
Having discussed the significance of PWG, this section discusses the arrangement itself. At the central level, the PWG is almost the same as the Central Committee of the party. At the provincial and lower level however, the membership is different (CPP 2008b). According to the CPP list of PWG membership nation-wide, each province has one provincial PWG, under which one district PWG is set up for each district, and then one commune PWG for each commune. The PWG, for both provincial and district level, is composed of party members from central, provincial, district and communes.

Usually, the high ranking government officials (prime minister, deputy prime ministers, ministers) are assigned to be the heads of provincial PWG, while lower rank *central* and, to a lesser extent, provincial officials are assigned as heads of district PWG. Such assignments, especially of the head of the PWG, for both provincial and district levels,

⁶⁷ This is based on my observation while working with ministries from September 2008 to February 2009, and also on media observation by the author during the same period.

are proposed and approved by the Central Committee of the party. The decisions, it was learnt, are made based on a number of factors, including the resourcefulness of the people to be assigned and their historical or personal affiliation to the area. Chapter 7 will discuss more on this.

Figure 14: PWG arrangement



Note: The arrows indicate the assignment of the head of the PWG, e.g. people at the centre are assigned to be the head of provincial and district PWG.

Despite being a mechanism established to provide financing for rural infrastructure projects country-wide, the PWG was designed not to rely financially on the party’s central budget⁶⁸. Instead, it was designed as a collection of many smaller personal networks, each assigned to ‘take care’ of a province, a district or a commune. Each PWG is responsible for mobilizing resources to build roads, schools, bridges, pagodas, and other election campaign spending within their assigned areas. Within the current arrangement, a clear labor division is noticed: the heads and members of the PWG from the central (and less frequently, provincial) level are usually in charge of fund-raising, whereas those from districts and communes are responsible for identifying and proposing projects.

A recent CPP’s list of central people supporting PWG by provinces⁶⁹ show that the numbers of listed members vary a lot by province: It shows only 86 people for Kampot province, 150 for Phnom Penh, 319 in Kandal, and 648 in Takeo (CPP 2008b). The completeness of the record can be brought into question . However, at least, I learnt that there is such a record, which in turn supports my argument that the PWG is not just a

⁶⁸ Key informant interviews with a government officer, September 05, 2008
⁶⁹ The document is not dated, but was assured by the key informant that it was developed in 2008

one-off operation, but a nation-wide, half formal and half informal arrangement within the party structure.

The central people's ability to raise funds for PWG⁷⁰ depends mainly on the kinds of positions they hold in the government. Ministers and high-level officials have considerable advantages in cultivating personal networks and mobilizing resources to fund their PWG activities. They are more likely to include most people who currently serve within their ministries or departments in their PWG. These people travel with their bosses to the province and district levels, acting as entourages for their bosses.

Being a part of the campaign means considerable contributions of time and money for those involved: even poorly paid central officials will contribute \$20, \$30, \$50 a month to a fund held in the name of their PWG head. The head will also actively solicit money from their own networks, and supplement funds from their own (including family) resources.

Confirming the hypothesis put forward in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.2.) about the resourcefulness, during fieldwork it was found that the resourcefulness of the PWG relates directly to the resourcefulness of the heads and its key members. Because almost all of these people are government officials, their resourcefulness in turn depends on which ministries or agencies they are from. To recall from Chapter 3, those from the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, of Commerce, of Agriculture (especially forestry, fishery or food quality departments), of Interior, various semi-autonomous authorities, are more resourceful than those from the Ministry of Education, of Health, of Social Affairs, or of Women Affairs.

PWGs headed and/or supported by those with positions associated with the Prime Minister were found to be highly resourceful; and those supported by people from legislative branches (including the National Assembly and Senate) tend to be medium or low in their resourcefulness. But the PWG is like an octopus trying to reach and make uses of various sources of support. This means that the resourcefulness is not just the function of which ministries their heads are from, but also how widely connected these people are with various potential sources of funding. As the illustrative cases below will show, a PWG can extend its reach to tap into state budget, NGO's funds,

⁷⁰ In some cases, provincial level officials are also active in fundraising. But that is not very common.

and private businesses, depending on the influence and connection of its heads and key members.

The presence of businessmen with *okhna* titles and the so-called advisors is another interesting aspect of the PWG. In Cambodia, wealthy businessmen seek to have a prestigious title called *oknha* granted to them. The *Okhna* title is granted to those wealthy people who contribute more than USD100,000 to national development and by that, it usually means building roads, schools, bridges and pagodas (Doung 2008). As of 2008, there were about 220 *oknhas*, ten of whom were women. Some of them even make their way to becoming members of parliamentary members (three), and senators (six) (Doung 2008). These *oknha* are particularly wealthy: it is known that about 23% of land in Cambodia is controlled by them (Doung 2008). Of relevance to this study, almost all of the *okhna* are closely associated with the CPP, and the list of the PWG confirms this (CPP 2008b).

Another popular title is ‘advisor’ (*Tipreksa*) which is one class lower than *oknha*. In Cambodia, many high ranking officials are entitled to many advisors. One high ranking official (who I cannot name) for instance has more than 100 advisors. But such ‘advisors’ are not the one who actually give advice; they are just titles created for powerful government and party officials to mobilize resources from wealthy people, and for those wealthy people to get a title and attachment to the officials. In the case of the sample official, out of the more than 100 advisors he has, only twelve were counted as ‘real’ advisors (meaning those whose job is to give advice). The rest were ‘advisors’ based on contributions⁷¹.

The price of the ‘advisor’ title depends on the perceived influence of the individual to whom the prospective advisor is attached. For the sample official, the price was about USD50,000. But if one knows the right channel, there will be ‘people who run the business’ (*nak rot kar*) who can help to get it only at USD20,000 to USD30,000. It was also learnt that once becoming an advisor, he or she will be automatically included in the PWG headed by the relevant officials⁷². Normal government officials can also become an ‘advisor’ if they make the contribution, and many do seek to have one. This is because the title helps top-up their official title. For instance, a deputy provincial

⁷¹ Fieldwork interview with a central CPP official, June 08, 2008

⁷² *ibid*

governor was said during my fieldwork interview as being more powerful than the governor, mainly because he was a close advisor to an influential person at the central level.

The study also collected data about PWG at district and commune level. Each district PWG is usually headed by high ranking (from Director General position and above) government officials. In addition to that, it might also have five to ten other people assigned from the central level and who are mostly responsible for raising fund. In this study, these people are called 'key members.' The district PWG (*not* the district administration) plays a very important role in the whole PWG hierarchy because it is the one which does the actual fund-raising, while the provincial PWG plays more of a coordinating role.

The government position occupied by the head is usually a good indication of who else from the central level were sent to help his PWG: if the head is from the Ministry of Commerce, the other central members tend to also be the ones from that ministry; if the head is a high ranking policeman, his people would tend to be from the Ministry of Interior, and so on. And if the head is an influential person (for instance, someone in key position of, say, Prime Minister's Office, customs, Ministry of Finance), there tend to be more wealthy financiers in his PWG.

While people from the central and provincial levels are responsible for fundraising, district and commune party officials are the ones who identify and propose projects. As with the implementation of the projects, the district PWG heads have the most say in contractor selection and payment. The communes in this regard will just wait to get the projects done.

This limited participation, however, seems to be what the commune prefers. All the commune chiefs interviewed said they are not interested in directly managing the money of the PWG. 'We do not want to touch the money,' commune chiefs usually said of the support from the PWG, 'we just want to receive the schools, roads, or irrigations when they are finished.' To the commune chiefs, the party money is '*hot money*,' meaning they might get into big trouble if they are accused of misusing it.

That said, however, in the shadowy arrangement of the PWG, the personal connections and the preference of the head of PWG play key roles, deciding who is more influential

than whom. In two districts visited, for instance, the district governors are very influential players in both project selection and implementation. One district governor is a friend and the other is a relative to the heads of respective PWGs. In two other districts, however, the district governors are much less influential. In another district, the head of the PWG relied on his nephew who runs a road construction company to take care of most of his PWG projects⁷³. In the other two districts, the heads of the PWG chose neither the district governor nor his relatives but commune chiefs to directly supervise project implementation.

However, during fieldwork, I observed that the head of the PWG relied heavily on the local level for some matters especially for arranging local election campaigns and handout distribution. At the meeting, the head of PWG (who is also a minister) explicitly gave the local activists (the commune chiefs and councilors) a lot of discretion⁷⁴. This is how he put it: *'I bring money to all of you today so that you can spend it. Please save and use it effectively. We need to be innovative. I don't mind if you keep some of the money in your pockets, as long as you manage to win'*⁷⁵. With the discretion, the commune people were also expected to deliver and be accountable to the electoral performance in their localities.

The PWGs have been able to raise millions of dollars every year to support local development and infrastructure projects. An estimation of the value is provided and discussed in the next chapter. Covered here is an explanation of how it works. First of all, the arrangements of PWG have been made possible because the state and its resources have been largely controlled by CPP people. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, since the economic liberation in 1989, the CPP-controlled government has opened up a new phase in which state officials have been progressively involved in using their state positions to seek rents for personal and group benefits.

The PWG is an example of how the CPP leadership uses the patronage and its accumulated wealth to advance political interest of the party. Such strategy has been masked by development and pro-poor agenda. Based on the speech by the Prime Minister and the report from his Cabinet, the whole arrangement of PWG is what he

⁷³ That PWG sometimes also contracted the Military Construction Group, a team which has been carrying out many of the Prime Minister projects.

⁷⁴ Fieldwork interview, June 18, 2008

⁷⁵ Personal note-taking of the meeting on June 18, 2008

would call '*the innovative application of the culture of sharing*' (Cabinet of Prime Minister 2008). In this sense, the party leadership has tried to show that they have been trying to take things back from the rich (their own rich people) and sharing it back with the rural people.

In other words, the party leadership was trying to show that what it has been doing is essentially about income redistribution⁷⁶. With that description, the PWG arrangement has been viewed (or at least, that is what the party wants the people to view) not within a framework of state-society obligations, but an elite-mass relationship where the former are expected to be generous and giving, and the latter to be loyal and appreciative. The Prime Minister has attempted to project himself as the intermediary who has made such generosity-loyalty relations possible.

The PWGs, this study further argues, were put together in ways that appear sensible and even motivating within the context of Cambodian culture and tradition. For instance, in explaining what he means by 'culture of sharing,' Prime Minister Hun Sen compared PWG contributions to the cash contribution practice in Cambodian weddings⁷⁷. As a tradition, when a couple gets married, they will receive cash from each guest coming to their event. The cash contribution is meant to help the newly-weds.

This arrangement is practically an unspoken mutual agreement or generalized reciprocity, for the couple will have to make cash contributions back when invited to other people's weddings, especially those who had made cash a contribution to them. The comparison made by the Prime Minister seems not only to make sense to local people, but also conveys a message that they are bound to do something back for the party in exchange for all the support received.

The arrangement also appeals to traditional beliefs of the elite themselves. Sentimental attachment with one's homeland, the desires to do merit-making and establish personal and family images, have been key motives for many elites to spend a lot of money building rural infrastructure projects, including pagodas. The CPP and its leadership have well understood this cultural belief and incorporated them into the PWG

⁷⁶ *Cambodia Daily Newspaper*, June 23, 2008

⁷⁷ Prime Minister Hun Sen, June 05, 2008, as noted during the media observation by the author during fieldwork from April to July 2008

arrangements. By so doing, the party has motivated their people to contribute not only on political and economical, but also moral grounds, making them feel they are being involved in a good cause that is sanctioned by beliefs, tradition and customs.

Homeland attachment, merit-making and the like are however just the 'soft elements' which keeps the PWG moving. The hard elements, which include party obligations, financial rewards or lack thereof, promotion or demotion, are also prominently at play. From key informant interviews, all key government officials who are seen as financially able to fund projects are required to become the head or at least a key member of a PWG. It is not surprising then to rarely see any party officials, who are usually government officials, who do not have an assigned district or commune.

Contributions to the party and electoral results in their assigned 'constituencies' are among the key performance indicators by which party officials will be assessed. The Central Committee keeps a detailed list of election results by commune, analyzing their trends since 1993. The party uses the analytical data as a reference check on people assigned as heads of PWGs in each area. Their performance at the election is used as one of the key criteria for decisions about where they will be placed, promoted or demoted in the new government.

The party is less restrictive as to how the PWG operates. Unlike the more rigid party and government structures, the PWG is open to various types of people who are willing and see advantages in being attached and contributing to the party in the name of rural development. Businessmen, or even people working in some non-governmental organizations, now see opportunities in the PWGs as ways to enter the party and make their contribution known to the powerful individuals who are heading that PWG and to whom they want to get close. Some rising and ambitious government officials also use PWG as a mechanism to show their loyalty and competency to their (governmental bosses) by making themselves useful members of his (the boss's) PWG.

As observed, there are many people who contribute to a PWG for rural development projects. However, only the few names of a few individuals are known, and these people tend to be the more powerful ones. The main reason is that these many other contributors are not primarily interested in building their public image, but more in establishing connections with the powerful officials. Some people were even willing to

pay extra to ensure that such connections are made explicit. For instance, some PWG members were said to spend USD30,000 to build a primary school, and about USD5,000 more just to get the school named after a certain powerful individual⁷⁸.

6.3. Three illustrative cases

In the following, three case districts are presented, not to provide a systematic evaluation of the PWGs, but to recount how they are actually arranged and operates on the ground.

6.3.1. Case 1: A PWG headed by a businessman

The first illustrative case is from a fairly populated district located in the north-west of the country. It is a well-off district quite close to the provincial centre, and has been experiencing rapid economic growth and urbanization in the last few years. People there rely mainly on rice farming and trading. The CPP dominated the district in 2008 election, taking about 60% of the votes cast. The PWG head is a high ranking central official who is also a businessman and has been running successful land speculation business both in Phnom Penh and various provinces.

He, according to the district governor, is not a long-term veteran of the party, or of official government bureaucracy. Instead, he has been known as an opportunistic entrepreneur, who saw the importance of having a position in the government to help his business. He is one of the new blood and has claimed a high position in the government and party through his 'advisor' position, which was provided to him personally in exchange for his constant contributions to the party. As part of his party obligations, he is assigned to take care of the district which is also his hometown. Under him are some other high ranking officials from Phnom Penh including a close relative of a deputy prime minister.

The district party official has kept very good records of the contributions from the PWG since 2003. The records were bound into a booklet entitled '*A List of the CPP's achievements for 2003-2007*'. Among all the districts visited, this is the district whose data in the field was complete enough to allow a fairly reliable estimation of the PWG's support. Based on the records and an interview with district governor, it was learnt that from 2003 to 2007, the district working group contributed about \$1,050,000, about 43%

⁷⁸ Interview with a central CPP official, June 06, 2008

of which was spent on schools, 25% on irrigation, 16% on pagodas, 3% on roads, and the rest on other support such as on housing and wells.

The record of the district was quite aggregated, requiring that I go to the commune level to learn more. I went to see a commune chief with whom I had had previous contact. According to the commune chief's estimate, the total support of PWG was around USD160,000 for the period from 2003 to 2007 for his commune. Most of this was spent on common infrastructure projects, namely, schools, roads, and one irrigation project. What is interesting about this commune is that a lot of PWG support was given to pagodas. The commune chief estimated that around \$200,000 was given to the six pagodas in that commune⁷⁹.

The district visited has ten communes. For the purpose of estimation, it was assumed that each of the ten communes in the districts received more or less the same amount of support. With this assumption, pagoda support district-wide would add up to about USD2 million dollars for the period from 2003-2007. Although appear to be too high, when considering that there are about 40 pagodas in the district, and how luxurious some of them are, the \$2,000,000 figure might not be too surprising. Most of the support to the pagodas was spent on construction, decoration, and big Buddha statues.

The support given to pagodas is included in the calculation of PWG support because for most cases, pagoda support is given in the name of the head or key members of the PWG. Usually, many people in the PWG will pool their contribution under the name of the PWG heads or members. That contribution is then given to the pagoda, usually during a religious period, called '*kathen*'.

Support to pagodas is also included as part of the party financing mainly because, as I observe, it is very common for people to associate a pagoda with a political party. For instance, it was said that in the commune, out of the six pagodas, three used to be CPP, three Funcinpec (i.e. the Royalists), but in 2008, five had turned CPP, leaving only one still

Table 5: PWG support from 2003-2007/2008

Types of supports	USD
Support on infrastructure	1,050,000
Support for pagoda	2,000,000
Hand-outs	450,000
Total	3,500,000

Source: District records obtained during the fieldwork

⁷⁹ The commune chief's estimate of the value of support to the pagoda was cross-checked with an estimation provided by a long-serving pagoda committee member.

deciding which way it would swing. This also reflects the politicization of the so-called 'Pagoda-Support Committee,' most of whose members act not only as older, respected people (*acha*), but also as key party activists.

Besides support for infrastructures, the PWG spent a lot on handouts especially during election campaign. In the case study district, for the 2008 election campaign, it was estimated that about \$150,000 was spent on handouts. For the period from 2003 to 2008, three elections took place: the 2003 national election, the 2007 commune election, and the 2008 national election. Assuming that the amount of handouts was similar for each of the three elections, the estimated total value of the handouts from 2003 to 2008 would be around \$450,000. In total, as Table 5 shows, the PWG support over a period of four to five years is estimated to be USD3.5 million.

What should this USD3.5 million be compared with? The ideal point of comparison would be the total state and donor budget disbursed to the district. However, such data is virtually impossible to obtain. First, given the current overly-centralized nature of the state budget, and the fact that district had ceased to be a budget level since 1994, there is no single, integrated budget data for districts. One remotely possible way to obtain data on how much state money has been disbursed to a district is to do the following: go to provincial departments of education, then health, agriculture, rural development, irrigation, and then religion to ask how much 'recurrent' expenditure has been transferred down. My experience of tracking expenditure in education sector in 2005, however, taught me that such tracking would not be possible because only aggregate (i.e. by province, not by district) spending data is kept at provincial departments (World Bank 2005).

Even if such data were possible to obtain, it would have covered only the 'recurrent' side of it, namely, salary, operations and maintenance, and travel per diems. In the current budgeting system, the investment side of the budget is not allocated down to provincial level, meaning one cannot obtain any information about the investment budget by visiting provincial departments. Moreover, such budget information is not even available at line ministerial level. To obtain it, one needs to go to the Department of Investment and Cooperation (DIC) of the Ministry of Finance. But even if the DIC were willing to share that information, it would still be worthless for the purpose of this

study because the information available there is nationally aggregated, showing disbursement by projects, without detailing the location of spending (Pak 2009a).

An alternative point of comparison, which would be both more feasible and justifiable, is the Commune Sangkat Fund (CSF). CSF is an unconditional grant for the elected commune councils. The CSF has an administrative component and an development component. The CSF is financed partly by the national budget and partly by donor contribution. The national budget contribution amounted to 2% of national recurrent revenue in 2002, and increased to 2.7% in 2008. The World Bank's contribution accounted for the biggest part of the donor supports. The annual CSF for each commune was estimated to be about USD8,680 on average from 2002 to 2006 (STF 2008)⁸⁰.

Besides the fact that its data is readily available at local level, what makes CSF amount a good point of comparison is its being the only development budget that has been transferred and managed at local level. Other development budget, as just discussed, is managed by the higher level through many standalone projects, with the local level having very little say and knowledge. In other words, the CSF is what makes the local-level people feel they are entitled to something from the state. Therefore, it is reasonable to compare the PWG support with CSF development component money.

In the case study district, the total CSF development budget allocated to all the communes was around USD 0.5 million for the period 2003 to 2007. Comparatively then, the PWG support for infrastructure in the district is about two times higher than the CSF. The proportion jumps to about 3.5 times if the pagoda support and handouts are also factored in.

As appears to be the case elsewhere, the head of the PWG plays a very important role in mobilizing resources. He is also personally close to the district governor. He even provides a personal contribution (a kind of 'personal' salary) of about \$40 per month to five CPP activists: three at the district level (including the district governor), and three in the case commune (including the commune chief). The commune and district people describe him as generous and accessible; he makes frequent visits to the district, especially during election campaign time. Every time he comes to visit, he brings gifts

⁸⁰ From 2011 onward, the CSF was increased to about US\$21,000 per commune (RGC 2010c)

and hand-outs. District and commune people consider him as resourceful not only because he is a rich businessman himself, but also because he has good connections to the top, along with extensive networks (*ksae bandanh*) with other businessmen and government people.

The relationship between the PWG head and the local officials is direct and close. The commune chief said *'I discuss matters with him on the phone and when he agrees, he asks me to go to Phnom Penh, meet him at his home or office. He would give me \$US5,000 at a time for me to arrange for the contractor to build or repair roads'*⁸¹. However, after a while, the PWG head became close friends with a contractor in the provincial center. From then on, most of the contracted works were implemented by this new contractor.

This, as we will see in other cases, is a part of a wider pattern in which central officials have close relationships with local party officials, but do not necessarily entrust the latter with project implementation, especially in terms of PWG budget management. Yet, the commune chief did not feel that trust was taken away from him. Rather, he did not want to be involved in the PWG money management either, saying that any small scandals associated with that money could cause him a lot of troubles in the party. Plus, he added, he is still the one who receives the cash for campaign spending. For that money, he said, he is given a great deal of trust and responsibility in management and distribution.

The good records kept in this first case district allowed me to reasonably estimate the relative size of PWG support. The quality of the records in the second case does not permit such reliable estimation. However, the dollars and cents of is not the most interesting thing about PWG. Instead, it is its operation and the political implications attached to it that deserve more attention, and this is what we will learn more from the second and third case district.

6.3.2. Case 2: A PWG and the state budgets

He is instead an influential, old party veteran who can manage to obtain resources not only from the PWG members and his informal network, but also uses his influence to have state budget allocated to his constituencies.

⁸¹ Fieldwork interview with commune chief, June 03, 2008

The second case district is located in a relatively poor area, with about 60,000 voters registered for the 2008 election. Ninety percent of the people there depend principally on rice-farming. Their main livelihood challenge has been drought and lack of irrigation water. The opposition has been weak in the district, relying on an electoral promise that appeals almost exclusively to the landless, that it will give back land to the people if it wins. The CPP, however, as in other provinces, relies on its ability to build things and on dividing and co-opting the opposition.

The PWG arrangement in this case is similar to that in the first case. The PWG head in this case, however, is not known for his wealth. Yet, he is known as one of the most powerful individuals in the Central Committee of the CPP. A veteran himself, he is known to be a person of principle. He is reputed among those I spoke to for believing in party solidarity and the obligation to serve the people, rather than being driven by personal financial incentives.

The PWG also has some key members some of whom are from the central and some from the provincial level. For those from the central level, most of them (four out of seven) are assigned to the district because it is their *srok com neut* (place of family origin). Those from the province are assigned to the district because they are seen as having ‘potential’ to help. As their positions (a deputy governor and four directors of line departments including Agriculture, Irrigation, Land, and Labour) indicate, these people can use their formal influence to meet the most pressing needs of the district: agricultural support and water.

On the size of PWG support, the records they kept show the number of projects, but not their values. Yet, based on various reports and interviews with the party officials at the district, some indicative findings were made about the size, sources and, more importantly, the ways in which the PWG has used to help the district. As shown in Table 6, the PWG support focuses on two things:

schools and irrigation-related activities. As with the schools, the support was largely provided by or in the name of the Prime Minister (around 50 out of the 75 classrooms).

Table 6: PWG support to the district

Type of spending	Units
Schools	75 classrooms
Roads	14 lines
Bridge	6 bridges
Small pipes	75 places
Dam	3
Pond	11
Wells	222
Rice	155 tons

Source: District records obtained during the fieldwork

As in the previous case, after visiting the district level, I went on to meet people in a commune in order to learn more about the PWG operation. In the commune, I looked at a roughly prepared list of PWG projects. The list showed that the biggest support from the PWG was the building of 15 classrooms, costing around \$US75,000, all of which were presented as direct gifts from the Prime Minister. The PWG also built a total of 9 kilometers of earth roads, costing around USD70,000. The PWG, with joint financing from the Red Cross of the Prime Minister's wife, has also helped dig 45 wells, each of which cost around \$200. Summing up, the supports from the CPP (which is partly Red Cross money) is estimated to be around USD150,000 for the period from 2003-2008, or three times that of the CSF disbursed to the commune for the same period⁸².

Support to pagodas was noticeably high, just as in the first case. Among the five pagodas in the commune, four are financed by CPP elites in the PWG, and the other by a Royalist family. Three out of the four CPP-financed pagodas have been very well resourced. Since 2003, on the estimation of the commune chief and members of the pagoda support committee, these three pagodas received at least \$US400,000. The support was used to construct two luxurious pagoda building and their luxurious fences (for some pagoda pictures, please see Chapter 7).

Supporting the pagodas also involves an interesting story. One businessman who owns various types of businesses in the provincial town, including a garment factory, a clean water distribution system, and a construction company, is a member of the district PWG. That businessman is the key financier of one of the three well-financed pagodas. In the interview, he said the main reason he made so much contribution (about \$50,000 just for construction, plus other types of in-kind and cash contributions) was because he wanted the pagoda to be remembered in his and his family's name. Since the French period, he said, no one had ever fully finished the construction of that pagoda. When the war came (in the 1970s), everything was destroyed. Now, he made his name for being the first to ever 'fully' finish the construction. The businessman, it was also learnt, is a very influential person and well connected with the provincial Governor.

Irrigation has been receiving little financial support from the PWC, despite the overwhelming need for farming water. As the commune chief related, there have been requests for PWG help for the rehabilitation of some canals, but the capital requirement

⁸² The CSF figure is based on Seila Task Force database

was too high for the PWG to mobilize among their members and networks. But this is the interesting point about this PWG: because it cannot mobilize sufficient resources from within the PWG, the head has used his influence to have a part of the national capital investment budget allocated for the irrigation development in the district. The following is how this occurred.

In the current budgeting system, all capital investment projects need to be approved by the central level. The head of the PWG, through his influence in the party, made direct contact with the minister to send technical people to conduct a feasibility study of the projects. The technical study judged the projects feasible, and it was agreed that they would be financed with state money. Up to this point, all the key decisions were made off the record. After the green light was given through this informal channel, the ministry asked its provincial line department to make a formal request for the funds. Unsurprisingly, the projects were approved and quickly implemented.

Without the influence of the head of the PWG, the project requests were much less likely to succeed because they would have to go through the much more tiring approval process of the formal budgeting system. In other words, they might have just ended up as just wish (or waiting) lists and it might take a year before it is known whether they are approved or rejected. Even approved, it might take many months before they could be implemented, and when implemented, they would go through many sign-offs (up to 10-15 signatures). To get through this sign-off, many informal fee payments are expected, adding up to about 20% to 40% of total project value (Pak and Craig 2008). With the intervention of an influential person like the PWG head in this case study, however, all these headaches were substantially minimized.

Another interesting finding in this district involves the relationship between the party system and the formal decentralization funding modality. In the district, there have been a number of instances where the PWG, rather than supporting a completely separate project, consulted the commune councils and decided to co-finance with the CSF, so that bigger and more desirable projects could be implemented.

One example is a canal rehabilitation project. The transferred CSF was enough to finance only part of the rehabilitation. To deal with the problem, the commune chief made a request to the PWG, and received about \$US3,000 from it to make the canal

project possible. In the absence of additional party funding, he related, a lower priority project such as building a road might have been picked up. This co-financing arrangement is just one of the many examples indicating that the PWG have not competed but complemented with other financing arrangements (e.g. NGOs, state budget and CSF).

6.3.3. Case 3: A PWG with good relationship with donors and NGOs

The third case is a district located along the Mekong. With about 52,000 voters, the case district is located in a fairly prosperous province. People there rely on a combination of rice farming, cash-crop, and fishing. The challenges for the poor living in the district are the floods which destroy crops every year and the poor roads by which they travel to bring their produce to the nearby market. In terms of politics, this is a district where the CPP was strongly challenged by the Royalist Party in both 1993 and 1998 elections. Even now, the opposition party has been doing quite well in the area, despite the growing domination of the CPP since 2003.

The head of the PWG assigned to the district holds a ministerial position in the government which gives him access to alternative sources of financing, including international donors and NGOs. He was born in the district and has powerful and spiritual memories about the place. Local people related a story of how spirits from one of the pagodas in the area saved his life during war time. His father is buried in the pagoda, and he regularly visits and prays at that place.

There are also some other big names in this district PWG: a senator, a high-ranking official from the health ministry, a deputy chief of a national port, and an under-secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development.

I asked the district party officials to provide an estimate on the monetary value of the PWG support. With incomplete record, the officials were not able to provide systematic estimation of the support value. However, the list presented below provides some ideas of its size.

Table 7: PWG and other supports to the district

Projects/ supports	Head of PWG	Gifts from CPP leadership	Other members of PWG	From NGOs*
Schools				
98-03	few	101 rooms	Cash contributions	46 rooms
03-08	25 rooms	40 rooms	Cash contributions	49 rooms
Roads				
98-03	3.1km	25km	Cash contributions	24.4km
03-08	32.0 km	none	2.8km	few
Pagoda				
98-03	No record			none
03-08	31 projects	8 big projects	Cash contributions	none
Wells				
98-03	30 wells	2 wells	Cash contributions	No record
03-08	37 wells	none	Cash contributions	30 wells
Canals				
03-08	4km	2.7km	Cash contributions	20.4km
Source: District records obtained during fieldwork and key informant interviews.				
*Interestingly, the PWG records also include these NGO-provided supports, arguing that it was because the head of the PWG had contacted and brought them to help the district.				

Key informant interviews indicate that there are many people in the PWG who have made contributions to the district. However, their names were rarely, if at all, listed in any public documents. This is because those contributors do not want their names to be known publicly; what they wanted was to be seen as serving or ‘giving face’ to the head of the PWG or the higher people in the CPP leadership (such as Prime Minister Hun Sen and Chea Sim), and not being seen as competing with them.

Interestingly, the district records show that all the support from donors and NGOs has come to the district through the PWG. One big donor support was given when a Korean delegation came to the area with the PWG head and agreed to donate a big dam with a value of about one million dollars. Discussions with local sources indicate further that, very often, local people do not really know which projects are given by donors, and which by government. But for sure, most people know the PWG head and that he has done a lot to bring support to their areas.

Four communes in the district are flooded every year. The governor informed me that those communes seem to have received much less support from the PWG. To get a better picture, I visited one of them. Interviews with the commune chief confirmed what the district governor had said. The commune received virtually no support from the period from 1993 to 2003, except for one secondary school built by Prime Minister

Hun Sen in 1997, and two occasions of food relief, also given by him. It was only in 2007 that a project to repair a 3.2 km flooded commune road was promised, provided the CPP won in the 2008 election.

Two reasons explain why such little support had been given. The first is a political one. Since 1993, the commune had strongly favored the Royalist party. The commune is also the hometown to a former high ranking Royalist party official who has provided support to the pagodas there. In other words, since 1993, the commune has been marked as a Royalist-supporting commune in a district progressively turning into the CPP hand. Since the Royalist party has been in disarray, its elite have not been able to provide much support. Plus, there is no CPP elite originally from this commune, therefore, there is no one who is particularly interested in helping.

The second reason relates to the geographical characteristic of the commune. It is flooded almost annually from the Mekong, which significantly destroyed especially roads and some irrigation systems. As such, it is said, the PWG found the place not very good to 'invest.' 'The PWG might have thought that people would not remember their help very long. Any roads built today will be washed away next year, and they would have to build them again. It is too expensive,' the commune chief said⁸³.

In the last local and national elections (2007 and 2008), the CPP managed to win, but only with a very small margin.

Coming back to the district PWG, another interesting observation was that the district and commune officials, along with pagoda committees, despite their active roles in proposing projects to be financed, have had very limited roles when it comes to project implementation. The PWG's head has a nephew who owns a construction company in the provincial towns. Virtually all of the projects were contracted to his nephew, while the local authorities and pagodas just 'wait to get whatever was built.'

Interesting too, the PWG in this case has supported not only infrastructure, but also help create a 'health funds', into which the PWG makes regular contributions. The fund however is managed by a close friend of the PWG head, who is also a rich businessman in the area.

⁸³ Fieldwork interview with a commune chief, June 28, 2008

To sum up, the three cases above were chosen to illustrate different aspects of the PWG arrangements and functioning. The first finding from the cases is that, in terms of fund raising practice, the PWG is like a big octopus reaching to various sources including the business world, the state budget, and even the NGOs and international donors. Second, the role of the PWG head is very prominent in the operation of the PWG, suggesting that the PWG is in itself a rather personalized entity.

Third, the PWG's support can be of help to local development, and it does not undermine, but complements with other financing sources, such as CSF, NGOs, etc. Fourth, there seem to be a close relationship between people from the centre and those at the district and commune. However, the central people, who are the fund-raisers, tend to show reluctance to allow the lower level people to manage the PWG projects and funds. When it comes to money, they still prefer to entrust it to those who are much closer to them personally, whether their close friends or relatives.

From the presentation of the cases, trying to make accurate estimation of the value of the PWG support is not easy. This is not because the party officials are unwilling to share, or they feel ashamed, or cautious about the political sensitivity associated with the PWG itself. On the contrary, they see the PWG support as achievements of the party, as something they should be proud of. The difficulty in estimating, however, comes from the uneven quality of the records kept at district and commune level. Despite such difficulty, however, this study has made an attempt to collect more empirical data about the PWG, based on the cases visited during the fieldwork. All these are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: The CPP's off-budget support: Perspective on the ground

This chapter continues from the last. Chapter 6 presented the overall arrangement of the PWG, and introduced three cases to show how the PWG actually operates on the ground. This chapter provides a more systematic presentation based on the findings from 11 districts (equivalent to 15 communes) focusing on the types and size of supports provided by the PWG, as well as regional variation. To complement this supply-side description (i.e. a description from the perspective of the PWG people), the chapter will also analyze the perceptions of the local people about the Party support. Finally, the chapter assesses the PWG's contribution to local development.

7.1. Types and size of PWG support

From the data drawn from 11 districts and 15 communes, the study finds that the PWG tends to support, in order of frequency, schools (primary schools in particular), rural roads, irrigation schemes, and pagodas. This finding is consistent with my observations about the kinds of projects often shown being inaugurated on TV by party officials. These types of projects are also the ones local people tend to remember being provided by the Party (this will be expanded in section 7.4 later)⁸⁴. The PWG support, it was also found, tend to focus only on capital investment and rarely on regular operations and maintenance (O&M). In interviews with commune chiefs, all but two of them responded that the PWG had never provided money for O&M, leaving this burden to be borne by local contributions and in some cases by commune councils which had used part of the commune's own CSF⁸⁵.

Due to the incompleteness of the records kept at district and commune levels, estimating the value of the support provided by the PWG is particularly challenging. However, the study attempts to provide a range of estimates, using the following methods.

First, the research uses the estimated values provided by the chiefs in six selected communes who kept records of the support they have received from the PWG. As

⁸⁴ Interestingly, the types of projects commonly financed by the PWG are consistent with those usually favored by the Prime Minister since 1995 (Cabinet of Prime Minister 2008)

⁸⁵ As with the two exceptional communes, the PWG set up a fund to finance regular repairs and maintenance. Such an arrangement, however, was very rare and occurred in the two communes mainly because of the exceptional resourcefulness of the head of the PWG.

shown in Table 8 below, the values of the support from 2003 until 2008 is estimated to be from 1.3 time to 6.5 times as compared to the development component of the CSF⁸⁶ for the same period.

While schools and roads received more attention, irrigation, although very important to agriculture, has received little support. According to anecdotal evidence, the reasons for such low support are. first, irrigation schemes usually requires big capital investment which, in most cases, is beyond the capacity of the PWG; and second, irrigation schemes require higher recurrent costs (pumping machines, gas, etc), a commitment that most PWGs do not want to get involved in.

Table 8: Levels of support in selected communes (from 2003-08)

Support (units and \$)/ Communes	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Schools (Classrooms)	30	18	10	20	15	6
(S)	150,000	120,000	50,000	100,000	75,000	13,000
Roads	2 big bridges	none	Dirt road (8.5km)	Dirt road (10km)	Dirt road (9km)	Dirt road (8km)
(S)	180,000	-	45,000	50,000	70,000	30,000
Irrigation	none	none	Dam (1.5km)/ Canal (4.5km)	Dam (0.9km)	None	None
(S)	-	-	62,000	12,000	-	-
Others	Wells..	Wells	Rices/wells	Generators	45wells	None
(S)	2,000	1,400	3,500	8,000	9,000	-
Total	332,000	121,400	160,500	170,000	154,000	43,000
CSF (Development component*) (S)	54,760	45,000	38,500	36,350	47,700	32,940
Party support as compared to CSF	6.5	2.7	4.17	4.7	3.2	1.3

Source: Information about the party support is based on fieldwork. The data on the CSF is based on data provided by an official of Seila Task Force.

The second method relies on the commune chief's personal experience to provide an estimation. Because they were familiar with both the CSF money and the PWG's support, commune chiefs were asked to compare the two. Based on the response from the ten commune chiefs, the answer was that, excluding support to pagodas, the PWG support is estimated to be two to four times that of the CSF. It is recognized that this estimation may be subjective, but it can at least serve to cross-check the record-based estimation above.

⁸⁶ CSF has two components: administrative and development. Here, the PWG support is compared only to the development part of it.

The last estimation was done at the district level, which was relatively more difficult. According to the three case districts where information was complete enough to make estimation, the party support was found to be around two to three times that of the CSF development component. Table 9 sums up the estimations derived from the different three methods:

Table 9: Different estimations of PWG support compared to that of CSF⁸⁷

1 st method – based on party records from six communes	1.3 – 6.5 times
2 nd method – based on estimation by ten commune chiefs	2 – 4 times
3 rd method – based on estimation by three district records	2 – 3 times

This study, using case-based approaches, does not claim that this estimation is nationally representative. It is instead the best this study can come up with. However, despite that, the estimation of this study is seen as a contribution to existing knowledge about CPP’s financing of infrastructure projects, simply because there has never been such an attempt before.

The PWG support is not given equally throughout the year and across years. Instead, because part of the PWG support is intended to gain votes, based on my TV observations and field interviews, the amount and intensity tend to go up during the six-month period leading up to elections. As observed, and also pointed out by one PWG head, in gearing up for the last election in 2008, PWG officials were most active going out to the rural areas, which also implied more projects were being given out. *‘Before only me who went out to campaign,’* a PWG head said in a district party meeting, *‘now, even my wife has to go out to help.’*⁸⁸ My TV observation confirms this claim.

PWG support for pagodas was also found to be significant. In the communes visited, there were usually from four to six pagodas⁸⁹, and most of them have people in the CPP PWG as their patrons. Traditionally, pagodas depended on contributions from local people during several annual ceremonies to support monks and the various ritual activities. However, currently, more and more pagodas in Cambodia have been receiving support from wealthy individuals, who in a way become their patrons.

⁸⁷ Throughout the country, based on the Seila Task Force database, from 2003 to 2008, the CSF development fund is averaged to be about USD12 million annually (STF 2008).

⁸⁸ Personal participation in CPP PWG at district level, June 18, 2008

⁸⁹ As of now, there are 4,400 pagodas in Cambodia (CPP 2008c)

Usually argued as acts of merit making, support for pagodas is also increasingly attached to politics as more of the individuals who provide such support, in one way or another, are attached to a political party.

Estimating party support to pagodas is particularly difficult for two reasons. First, the contribution from the PWG is often put together with the local contribution. Second, sometimes, the heads and members of the PWG claim that such support is their personal contributions, without explicit mention of the party. Despite such difficulty, the study learnt that a large part (more than 80% by the commune chiefs' estimation) of the supports given to the pagoda come from donors from outside the communes, and whether explicitly or implicitly indicated, those individuals tend to be associated with the CPP.

Overall, support to pagodas has been huge. This claim is based on three sources of data. The first is from my own field observations. Going around the country, I often saw very luxurious and imposing pagodas, erected amidst rice fields and in poor communities. The second piece of evidence comes from the three illustrative case communes presented in chapter 6. From those cases, PWG support to pagoda is even higher than that given to secular projects such as roads, schools, and irrigation canals.

The third source of data is the rough estimation provided by the commune chiefs and pagoda committee members. Their responses were that, compared to CSF development components, the party support given to pagodas are around three to seven times that of the CSF. These three methods, again, are subjective, but at least they can provide an insight into the perception of local authorities about party support.

Support for pagodas is also interesting in the way its request is put forth. In some cases, it goes through a channel that is quite independent of the commune chief, i.e. through the pagoda committee. Being the 'executive branch' of a pagoda and traditionally influential, the committee in some cases is said to get in touch directly with PWG heads; sometimes, they even compete with the commune chiefs in seeking PWG supports. And when they compete, they rarely fail because both the PWG and the local people tend to be more welcoming, or at least find it hard to say 'no' to requests from pagodas. For PWG head and many Cambodian Buddhists, saying 'no' to requests from pagodas means saying 'no' to merit-making itself.

Figure 15: PWG support in pictures⁹⁰



This is a CPP poster showing pictures of various types of infrastructure projects under the CPP logo and leadership. The letters read 'vote for the CPP, we get roads, bridge, irrigation, and thousands of schools, hospitals and pagodas everywhere.'



This big secondary school was funded by a resourceful PWG from the Ministry of Finance.



This dirt road was road recently built by the CPP's PWG.



A CPP road damage by rain because there is no support for maintenance.



A luxurious pagoda built by a businessman who is assigned to be head of a PWG.



This is a school in a commune that has a less resourceful PWG. The CPP still managed to win more votes in 2008.

⁹⁰ These pictures were taken by the author during fieldwork in 2008.

Helping pagoda, however, has recently gone beyond just merit making; it has become part of the quest for personal image on the part of the contributor, and a race to show off on the part of some pagoda head monks. For some time now, there has been talk about pagodas of the rich and those of the poor. In the former, pagodas are built to show just how rich it is (or its supporters are). Even the Prime Minister himself has noticed this trend. ‘*Pagodas now,*’ he joked, ‘*do not want to just build residences (kots) for the monks, but villa residences (villa kots).*’⁹¹

Some local authorities have also made a similar observation. From the interviews, 7 out of 11 commune chiefs and 4 out of 7 district governors said they appreciated the support given to pagodas, but added that at least some parts of that should be shifted to secular development projects, especially irrigation. Similar concerns were also expressed by some local people, as will be shown in section 7.4.

7.2. Regional variation

Although the PWG has funded infrastructure projects throughout the country (as Table 8 shows), the sizes of its support varies a lot from place to place – at least, in term of its comparison to the size of the CSF. This section examines this variation. Once again, the challenge of data incompleteness requires that this section relies partly on qualitative data which includes some of my own field observations. Also, the findings of this section should be taken as indicative rather than conclusive.

The argument here is that, while several factors might serve to explain the variation, three are of significance, namely, (i) the resourcefulness of the head and members of the PWG, (ii) the level of personal attachment that PWG heads and key members have with the district/commune they are assigned to (e.g. it is their or their spouse’s homeland), and (iii) competition for votes. This section discusses the first two, leaving the third to be further detailed in the next section.

The methodology chapter (chapter 3) already discussed how the resourcefulness of PWG’s heads and key members is determined. Applying that method, this study found that such resourcefulness, although not decisive, is the primary factor determining the level of supports to a constituency. The study bases its argument on two sources of

⁹¹ Personal observation of the author

data. The first came from my own observations and key informant interviews in four different case districts.

In district 1 and 2⁹², the head is from the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, respectively. Using the resourcefulness ranking as discussed in chapter 3, the heads of these two district PWGs are more resourceful than the head of district PWG in district 3 who is from the Senate, and of the PWG in district 4 who is from the Ministry of Information.

According to the list of the projects, together with qualitative information obtained on these four districts, the study came to a ranking that the supports given to the first two districts was larger than that provided to the third and fourth districts. While it was difficult to come up with exact dollar values of the projects given, the study based its ranking of the support given also on field observations and interviews with local and party officials.

The second source of data comes from the survey of the better-informed and active local people (See chapter 3 on the methodology associated with the survey). As indicated in Table 10 below, when asked what makes them think some communes received more or less support than other communes (either nearby or that they know of), those who think they know the answers said that it is because the heads of the PWG are richer or poorer.

Table 10: Reasons for higher or lower support according to the survey with better informed local people

<i>What do you think that makes the PWG support to a commune high or lower? (Number of respondent: 35)</i>	<i>%</i>
Resourcefulness of the head and key members of the PWG	65
Homeland to the head or key members of PWG	35

Source: Survey conducted by the study (See chapter 3 for more information)

Another key factor which determines the levels of PWG supports is whether the head of the PWG (or their spouse) is originally from that area, i.e. their homeland. The effect of this factor is especially pronounced at commune level, for it is this level that people tend to consider as their homeland. Field observations strongly suggest that CPP elites tend to provide more help – much more, to theirs or their spouse’s homeland, i.e. their

⁹² The districts are referred to as 1, 2, 3 and 4 in order to keep confidentiality of the places visited.

places of birth. This sentiment is very strong, as an old Khmer saying puts '*wherever people go, they will always go back to their homeland when they are old and die.*'

A few real cases can be offered here. In the case study district where the PWG head is an official from the Ministry of Information, for example, although district wide, the support given seems to be relatively low, the support that he gave to his homeland *commune* was very considerable. His homeland commune during the period from 1998 to 2008 received many projects, including a 4 km paved road, a big steel bridge, lit by solar-powered lamp and a 10-classroom school building constructed at a height above flood level. A rough estimate of the total support poured into this commune, as provided by the commune chief, was no less than \$750,000.

The support, of course, did not come from him alone, but some other prominent figures and businessmen from whom he solicited contributions. But regardless of the source, the amount of support poured into his homeland commune is in stark contrast to that given to a nearby commune which is not his homeland. In this other commune, since 1998, the supports from the PWG included only one primary school and a 2.3 km dirt road, which was washed away within a year by floods and has not received anything else since then.

This PWG head has given and mobilized a lot of support for his homeland commune because it is his *place of origin*, a strongly felt notion among Cambodian elites. His whole family, it was learned, was from that place and his grandfather and father were well respected people there. A memorial-like stupa was built for his ancestors in the compound of a pagoda. Annually, in a Buddhist ceremony called *ka-then* which takes place right after the festival of the dead (around September), the head regularly brings a lot of support and contributions to that pagoda. His visits to the commune are also noticed to be unusually frequent: in a normal year (meaning, not an election year), he usually visits about six times; the number of visits increases during an election year, especially in the six months prior to the voting day.

Local chiefs also informed me that the head has been superstitious about that commune since the war time, where he, while escaping from the Khmer Rouge, took an oath that he would come back to make offerings to the 'supernatural power' there, should his life be spared in the killing field.

The support driven by homeland sentiment is even more impressive in the district 2 where the PWG head is from the Ministry of Finance. In that case, although throughout the district, the support is high, as evidenced by the many tangible projects, the support that the PWG head gave to his homeland commune is probably the most impressive of all. It includes a massive 50 or more classrooms of secondary schools with attractive artistic designs, palace-like pagodas, and a 10 km dam protecting a major part of the rice field there from the Mekong flood.

There are two explanations for the '*homeland effect*'. First, most of the current CPP elites have their origins in the rural areas, where their families (and parents) were peasants. War time turned the country upside down, allowing the people of more humble origins a chance to make their marks. These elites, although now living luxurious lives, still have a strong affection for their place of origin, which is a driving force for them to go back and help their homelands. Other motives include the desire to build their images and a legacy for themselves and their family (or family line) in their hometown.

The other reason is that, within the affairs of the party, it would be a cause for shame among their peers and a disappointment to their superior (whoever that might be) for a key CPP elite to lose votes in his homelands. '*Weeks after the election result comes out,*' one key informant described, '*those whose homeland did not win would not even want to meet their peers face to face, lest they ask how come they did not win.*' It is something to be ashamed of, he added⁹³.

So, it is the resourcefulness of the heads of the PWGs and the personal connection to their homeland that mainly determine the level of support. Interestingly, the CPP Central Committee grasps this fact so well and applies it in the way it dispatches people to various PWGs to ensure more regional equality in the levels of support.

The result was an arrangement, where some resourceful people are assigned to be heads of a PWG for provinces and districts which are not their homelands. For instance, some key MOI officials, although most of them are from Prey Veng province, are instead assigned to Battambang province. The point is that if the party just all the party officials

⁹³ Oddly, however, the Prime Minister himself used to lose big in his homeland (Kampong Cham province) to the Royalists in 1993.

choose, they would only choose to go back to their homelands, and that would result in some provinces receiving so much higher supports than others.

The profiles of the members assigned from Phnom Penh to selected district PWGs, as illustrated in Table 11 below, shows that in each PWG, there are always people whose places of origin are not the district or province they are dispatched to. The number, of course, varies, with PWG number 4 having six out of seven key members originally not from the district, and PWG number 1 having only one out of the five key members who is not from the district⁹⁴.

Well-informed local people also express a similar perception of how and why the elites come to help their communes. About 35% of them said they (the elites) were here because the party assigned them, 28% said it was because the commune or district was his (the elite’s) homeland, and, lastly, they come to help because the people here voted for the ruling party.

Table 11: PWG key members in five case districts

District PWG	Number of key members sent from Phnom Penh whose homeland is in the district/ province compared to total number of key members
1	4 out of 5
2	5 out of 10
3	3 out of 4
4	1 out of 7
5	7 out of 11

Source: Survey conducted by the study

Table 12: Reasons for PWG member assignment, according to the survey with the well-informed local people

Why do you think the elites come to help your commune?	%
Party assignment	35
Hometown	28
Vote for his party	22
Don't know	15
Total	100

Source: Survey conducted by the study

The Party has tried to create a mix in PWG membership of those that are resourceful and those who have origins in a particular place. Yet, despite such attempt, key informant interviews indicate that, areas which are the homelands of high-ranking officials tend to receive much higher support than those that are not. In addition to the cases qualitatively presented earlier, the most obvious evidence to support this claim is the amount of support (especially number of schools) the Prime Minister himself has

⁹⁴ By ‘key’ members, this study refers to those people who are reported as the ones most active and responsible for raising funds for the respective constituencies.

given to various provinces in the country. Originally from Kampong Cham (the most populated province in the country), the Prime Minister has been shifted to be the head of the PWG in another similarly populated province: Kandal province.

According to his recent cabinet report, in the last 13 years, the Prime Minister, either by or in his name, has built 3,030 schools, equivalent to 15,267 classrooms. Table 13 shows that out of this number, his PWG province and his hometown province (among the 24 provinces countrywide) have received the largest number of those classrooms: 17% in Kandal and 18% in Kompong Cham. Of course, the number of children that need to go to schools in these two provinces might be higher than in other provinces (see Table 13), but this is not a convincing explanation for the pattern of the distribution. The key explanation, this study strongly argues, is because they are his PWG province and his homeland province. It is not just schools but irrigation projects too that have been distributed more to these two provinces by the Prime Minister: out of the 43 main pumping stations he has provided, 15 are in Kandal and 5 in Kompong Cham.

Table 13: Prime Minister’s schools built by him or in his name

Provinces	No of classrooms provided by or in the name of the PM (National percentage)	# of enrolled students in 2008 (National percentage)
Kandal (his PWG province)	2,570 (17%)	295,182 (8.97%)
Kampong Cham (his homeland)	2,733 (18%)	408,367 (12.42%)
The province with the 5 th most classrooms given from PM	835 (5.5%)	155,419 (4.73%)
The province with the least number of classrooms given from the PM	37 (0.2%)	42,574 (1.29%)
Note: The total number of classrooms of built by or in the name of the Prime Minister from 1998 to 2008 is 15, 267 (Source: Cabinet of Prime Minister (2008))		

7.3. Levels of party support and number of votes

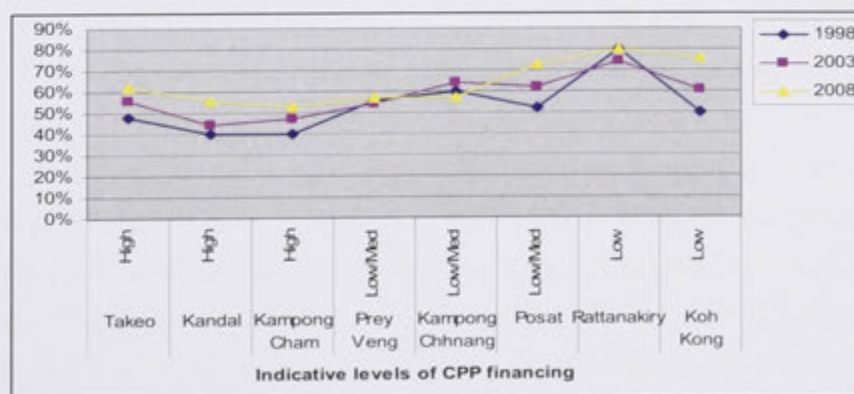
Is there any correlation between the number of votes gained and the level of support given by the PWG? This study does not have sufficient data to robustly test this correlation. However, it can give at least an indicative answer to the question. What this study has done was to compare the level of support (grouped into high, medium and low) with electoral results for the CPP in selected provinces. The comparison suggests that although the indicative amounts of support might have been the impetus for the

increased number of votes, the correlation between the two is not decisive. The correlation is even less clear when a comparison among selected communes is made.

At the level of province, it is clear that provinces which have had prominent and resourceful PWGs heads and key members have seen an impressive increase in number of votes for the CPP. Resourceful PWG in turn means high supports given to those areas. As suggested in Figure 16 below, the first three provinces (Takeo, Kandal, and Kampong Cham) have the Prime Minister and powerful deputy prime ministers as the heads of their PWG. It is clear that from 1998, the number of votes for the CPP in these provinces has increased dramatically.

This pattern makes sense when viewing the cases of Prey Veng and Kampong Chhnang provinces where the party support is ranked as *low* because the PWGs in the two provinces are not headed by resourceful groups of people. The pattern, however, no longer holds when Posat province is considered. In Posat, although with a less resourceful PWG head, the CPP has experienced a very impressive increase in votes, from 1998 to 2008 – an even greater increase than in Kompong Cham, Kandal and Takeo. The correlation between the level of support and the votes, even more interestingly, was almost non-existent when considering the last two provinces, Rattankiri and Koh Kong.

Figure 16: % of CPP votes in three national elections



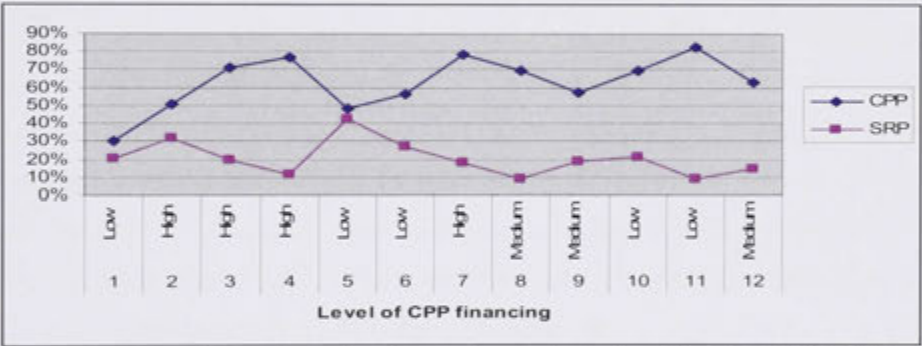
Source: Data from the electoral analysis book of the CPP (CPP 2008a)

The inconclusiveness of these correlations is further confirmed when the focus is zoomed in to the commune level. Twelve communes that were visited during the fieldwork are used here. To ensure confidentiality, the communes are referred here only

by numbers. Each commune, depending on the level of resourcefulness of its PWG head (again, see chapter 3 on the resourcefulness issue), is classified as low, medium, or high in terms of PWG support received. Figure 17 illustrates this.

While the communes that have received high levels of supports from the CPP have seen high shares of the votes for the party (communes 2, 3, 4, and 7), the communes that receive low support have also given the party high votes (communes 6, 10, and 11). The percentage of SRP votes does not seem to be in parallel with the indicative level of CPP financing either: in the 2008 election, the SRP managed to gain more than 30% in commune 2 where CPP financing is high, but only less than 10% in commune 11, where the CPP financing is low. In between, as Figure 17 also shows, the correlations seem to be mixed.

Figure 17: Percentage of CPP and SRP votes in 2008 election
 défini



Source: The figure is based on the electoral analysis book of the CPP (CPP 2008a)

This study suggests that party financing is definitely a contributing factor to number of votes gained by the CPP, a finding which is generally consistent with that of the IRI (2008). However, the study also suggests that there are more factors than just the amount of the PWG support that determine the number of votes. Those other variables, according to results from the key interviews and observations, might include the party's administrative capacity in mobilizing voters, the popularity of local chiefs, the levels of competition from the opposition and the living standards of the people within each area. To confirm the significance of these other factors, a more rigorous quantitative data analysis is required.

7.4. People's perceptions

Sections 7.1 to 7.3 above based more on the interviews with party officials, who can be considered as the 'supply' side of the equation. To obtain a more rounded picture, it is also important to understand the perceptions of local people about the party's support. That is, it is also important to present the 'demand' side to complement the 'supply' side. Such perceptions, first of all, need to be understood, keeping in mind the common characteristics of Cambodians as voters and their general perceptions about the state and those in authority. While chapter 5 has already discussed all these, some key points are re-emphasized here.

First, it is noted that, despite some economic progress being made, rural people in Cambodia are still in vast needs of better infrastructure. Second, from the historical perspective, expectations of the people of the state have been very modest, even compared to those in other developing countries. As briefly mentioned in chapter 5, many people who are now in their 40 or 50 have lived through four or five regimes, all of which have left varying degree of horrifying memories. These historical memories significantly shape their perceptions and expectations of the state. Third, their perceptions have also been shaped by other factors, including the influence of the so-called 'heads of the winds' in their localities, the media, and the limitations of their knowledge about public affairs. These contextual factors need to be considered when more specific perceptions from the people are interpreted.

7.4.1. Findings from the 'Ordinary people' survey

This section will present some of those specific perceptions, using the results from the surveys (see more on the survey methodology in chapter 3). For the 'ordinary people,' although some of their responses are very insightful, in general, it was found that this group is generally poorly informed about matters beyond what they can see with their own eyes, and what their village authorities selectively tell them. Also, it was clear that people were in desperate need of any kind of support that was given to them: 83% of them feel grateful for whatever projects that were given to their community by the CPP and anyone else.

Table 14 below presents more specific findings. An interesting point is that the ordinary people, while not very knowledgeable about many things, think that most of the

infrastructure projects in their community have been built by the CPP, and particularly by Prime Minister Hun Sen (altogether, accounting for 18% and 38%, respectively).

Table 14: Ordinary people’s perceptions about local development and the CPP’s support

Description	% ⁹⁵
Those who can identify three or four development projects given to their communities since 1998	70
Those whose first response was that the Prime Minister Hun Sen was the one who supported the project that first comes to their mind	38
Those whose first response was that other elites of CPP’s PWG supported the project that first comes to their mind	18
Those whose first response was that they were told by village authority (chiefs or deputy chiefs) about who supported the projects	55
Those whose first response was that they knew by themselves (e.g. sitting in an inauguration ceremony) about who supported the projects	38
Among those who can identify party projects, those whose first project remembered was	
- Schools	48
- Roads	14
- Irrigation	14

Source: Survey conducted by the study

Another interesting point from the survey is the role of village authority in disseminating information to the people. Village authorities (chiefs and their deputies) are appointed officials, getting salary from the Ministry of Interior. They are in many ways observed to be key operational forces forming the basis of the state and the ruling party. Village authorities, in the state line, are in charge of disseminating information from commune to people, mobilizing people to attend meetings, and raising local contributions. In the party line, they work with their ‘group heads’ to campaign and persuade people to join the party, observe tactical attacks from the opposition, mobilize people to attend party-sponsored ceremonies, and distribute party handouts. The survey findings show that village authority has been the key actor forcing national politics agenda and political messages onto local people.

7.4.2. Findings from the ‘Better-informed local people’ survey

The survey of the better-informed local people provides deeper and more specific insights about local perceptions. Out of the 195 respondents, 27% of whom were village chiefs, 16% were pagoda committee members, 16% are teachers and school

⁹⁵ Please note that the percentage figures in this column are not supposed to add up to 100%. The table is a summary of responses given to different questions in the survey.

directors, and the rest are farmers who are known to be active in community affairs. Table 15 summarizes the key findings from the survey of the ‘better-informed local people.’

The survey results show that, unlike the ‘ordinary people,’ this group tends to have closer interactions with commune authorities: 40% of them responded that they know of party supported projects from the commune chiefs. But similar to ordinary people, schools seem to be the kind of project that comes first to their mind (76%) when asked about party support, followed by roads and irrigation.

While appreciative of the PWG support, this group of respondents think that the targeting of support should be adjusted to some extent: 32% of them said the support given to their communes should be given to different projects. This opinion is especially noted in areas where irrigation has been the biggest need. This is consistent with the expression from the commune chiefs as well. In those areas, commune chiefs have been complaining about insufficient irrigation water, the result of which has been people’s farming being too vulnerable to drought.

Respondents from this group also see that the CPP elites have been the key supporter of the pagodas in their communities, and about 55% of them observe that there has been a close relationship between the PWG heads and head monks in those pagodas. However, they do not think that this is wrong in any sense.

Table 15: Key findings from the ‘better-informed’ local people survey

Description	% ⁹⁶
Those who get information about party support from the commune chiefs	40
Those who think of schools as the first type of projects of the party	76
Those who think the party should change the targets of their support to irrigation projects	32
Those who think the support to pagodas should be shifted to irrigation	31
Those who think that it is a good idea to seek support from the ruling party	77
Those who strongly express that people should be grateful for the support	82

Source: Data from the survey conducted by the study
 At the same time, however, about 30% of them think that support to pagodas – while helpful in promoting Buddhist practices in the community, and more directly, relieving the burden of local contributions, have become too large and unnecessary. Irrigation,

⁹⁶ Please note that the percentage figures in this column are not supposed to add up to 100%. The table is a summary of responses given to different questions in the survey.

they emphasize, is where more support should be given. Such opinion about pagoda is also comparable to that of commune and district authorities, as presented earlier (Section 7.1).

Interestingly, during the survey, I rarely heard people question the legality of the sources of money that the PWG has used to provide support. This is interesting because, at the national level, the opposition parties often criticize the CPP for using corrupt money to build schools, roads, and pagodas. They also urge that people question where the money is from⁹⁷. However, the survey shows that even among those considered to be better informed local people, the questioning on the source of money has rarely been raised.

This does not mean that the party is clean of corruption charges. Instead, what the survey findings show is that for many local people, the needs are so overwhelming that gratitude is the first sentiment that comes to their minds when any projects are given to them and their localities (more than 80% of them think this way). In addition, when asked whether they think it is a good idea for commune chiefs, being elected by the people and representing people of all political preferences, to seek support from the ruling party, more than 75% said 'yes,' 3% said 'no,' the rest had no idea. For those who said 'yes,' the reason given is that the needs of the people should be urgently addressed, and that political issues should only come next.

However, the fact that people rarely ask where the money comes from might also have cultural dimensions to it. First of all, local people see the party support as an act of generosity on the part of the PWG elites. And generosity, when seen as merit making, should not be questioned, for to do so is rude and ungrateful. Putting even more weight on this point, Cambodian tradition, reflected through folk tales, has a nasty name for the ungrateful: *the crocodile*. This notion is strongly felt not only among local people, but also local authorities. 'To return the act of generosity of the Party,' the commune chiefs and district governors are commonly heard saying during the interviews, 'our jobs are to work hard to maintain the projects given and encourage the people to vote for the party.'

⁹⁷ *Neak Chea Bulletin*, Year 11, June 30, 2009

When asked if the support from the PWGs should somehow be integrated and reflected in the CSF, all the chiefs and governors responded ‘no,’ arguing that this support is ‘a gift’ and shows the generosity and benevolence of the elites and CPP leadership. Therefore, their benefits and credits should be distinguished from that of the state. Interestingly, ‘gifts,’ ‘generosity,’ and ‘benevolence’ are also the images that the party wants the local people to perceive: the title of the report issued by the Prime Minister Cabinet in 2008 reads *‘The Gifts of Samdech Prime Minister and His Wife to the People Countrywide.’*

7.5. Contribution of PWG support to rural development

Based on the cases visited and existing studies, this section briefly discusses the contributions of PWG support to rural development. My first tentative argument on this issue is that, because the need for rural infrastructure is still vast, the support from the PWG, to a different extent, must have had positive impacts on rural livelihoods. But such support has its pros and cons, as follows.

Starting with the pros, it is argued here that the support given by the PWG has been particularly pro-poor given its targeting and the way in which each project is selected. Actually, most projects financed by the PWG tend to be those most needed by the people, because most of them are usually the ones included in the so-called Commune Investment Plan (CIP)⁹⁸.

Another positive aspect of the PWG support is that it has complemented, not competed with, other sources of funding. A commune, in a nutshell, can receive funding from the CSF (which is about US\$8,680 per year for the period from 2002 to 2006 and increase to about US\$21,000 in 2011 (STF 2008; RGC 2010c)), together with various projects from NGOs, donors and government. Commune authorities usually have a rough idea of which commune projects these other donors might support, and with this knowledge, they try to propose to the PWG that it should fund activities that are left unfunded.

A big chunk of PWG support has gone to rural roads and because the PWG road projects are so similar to those funded by CSF, assessment of the latter can also be used to infer about the former. Tracey-White and Petts argue that most roads (dirt and laterite) have been pro-poor, saving people time in traveling (Tracey-White and Petts

⁹⁸ CIP is a list of investment projects which is drawn from participatory meetings with local people.

2001). Abrams (2004) later on provides a more in-depth economic analysis of this funding, showing that about 90% of the benefits derived from rural roads is captured by the residents of rural communities. A more recent study by CDRI also indicates that roads have been the key factor determining whether a community is likely to stay in or move out of poverty (Fitzgerald and So 2007).

The biggest investment by the party and its elites has been on schools. The party achievement report indicates that the Prime Minister has helped build about 15,267 classrooms, or about 30% of total classrooms countrywide. Many other party elites have also built many schools (CPP 2008c:283-90). Political and other personal interests aside, it is obvious that these elites have contributed a lot to the improvement of education in the last decade, a situation which has been occurring in parallel with the increasing commitment of the state and donors to this sector. Partly because of the CPP financing of school buildings, it is now reported that the lack of classrooms is less of a challenge than it used to be. However, education quality is still a big concern (MOEYS 2005; NGO Education Partnership 2007; Pak 2009a)

Support to pagodas, besides having religious significance and relevance, has also helped rural people economically, although its extent cannot be calculated in this study. Prominently Buddhist, rural people in Cambodia see pagodas as not just a place for them to seek spiritual well-being, but also as an institution that they are obliged to support. Every year, a pagoda holds various ceremonies and occasions to which local people voluntarily make contributions. One of the intentions of the contributions is to construct pagodas and upgrade their compounds. People rarely say 'no' to such fund raising, although it does take away some food from their family budget. So, this study argues that the party's and elite's support to pagodas indirectly helps the local people, by relieving them of some of their obligations to contribute directly to the pagodas.

Another positive aspect of the PWG support is that, although its main objective is to help win electoral support, it has rarely been used to discriminate against voters who are known to support the opposition. Children from families voting for the oppositions have rarely been denied entry to schools built by the Prime Minister or other CPP elites; and rarely have farmers who are known not voting for the CPP been denied from traveling on CPP roads, from taking water from CPP-built irrigation and pumping stations, or from going to pray in pagodas built by the CPP's people. However, as

indicated in case 3 in section 6.3.3, it is possible that the CPP paid less attention and provided much less support to an area (possibly, a village, a commune, or even a district) in which most people voted for the Royalist or opposition party.

Of course, the party has done this to co-opt more people and to ensure that its good image is retained. Even so, the fact that it has not used its support as a punitive tool towards non-supporters places the CPP in contrast to some other ruling parties, such as the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore in the 1980s and 1990s where government support was used as a threat to people living in districts known to be anti-the government (Crouch and Morley 1999:313-55).

Besides all the practical and poverty-alleviation orientation of the funding, a number of inherent limitations of the PWG's support are identified. As far as rural development is concerned, three limitations are identified: sustainability, adequacy, and regional equality.

Timing is the first challenge to sustainability. It was observed that although the support from the PWG support arrives continuously from year to year, most of it tends to come about three to six months prior to and after elections: the pre-election is when promises are made, and the post-election is when the promises are delivered. It is also noted that national elections, not so much in the case of local elections, draw more support. Therefore, in the five years between elections, people might see a lot of fluctuation in party support across time, and this is not sustainable.

Another sustainability issue is the scant attention given to regular operations and maintenance of the projects by the PWG. The elites who provide the supports want tangible results to show the people and they want to add to the scores of tangible projects built. They do not pay much attention to whether the existing projects are running well, leaving the day-to-day operations and maintenance responsibility to the local authority and community.

Inevitably, insufficient attention paid to maintenance undermines the pro-poor impacts of the projects and, more importantly, their sustainability. Abrams, in his economic analysis, shows that at a discount rate of 12% for rural roads, the Economic Internal Rate of Return (EIRR) was estimated at 25% with maintenance and 6% without maintenance. For wells, the EIRR was at 10% with maintenance and -3% without

maintenance (Abrams 2004). Regular maintenance is even more challenging for irrigation schemes (Aruna Technology 2006)⁹⁹.

The adequacy issue, on the other hand, comes from the small volume of financing that can be afforded at a particular point in time by the PWG: this makes the PWG arrangement unfit to meet some of the most urgent local needs, especially, irrigation. Although so central to Cambodian farmers, irrigation has not been sufficiently supported by the Party or the state in general. The reason for this is not a lack of understanding, but the lack of sufficient capital to invest: people ask for irrigation support, and the government and the PWG hear it, but they do not have sufficient capital to respond. Plus, irrigation requires on-going operations and maintenance, a type of recurrent spending which the PWG tends to avoid.

Finally, as argued earlier (in section 7.2), although the party has attempted to take into account the potential regional inequality in the PWG support, the situation in which some regions have received much higher levels of supports than some others have still persists, regardless of their poverty levels.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter and the previous chapter together answer the following questions:

- How has the off-budget party support been arranged and given by the CPP?
- What more can we learn from such off-budget party support about the CPP, especially in terms of its relations with the state and elite/patronage? and
- What have people perceived about the off-budget support and what does it mean for the CPP's legitimization effort?

From the discussion in both chapters, several conclusions are offered. First of all, it is clear that the PWG support does assist and contribute to rural development especially in the most needed area of infrastructure. Its amount, however, using estimates made in this study, is not very large, especially compared with the state national budget, and donor support annually. It is however a large amount of money compared to that of the CSF, which so far has been the only funding that gets transferred as a part of the decentralized arrangements.

⁹⁹ All these studies were done on CSF funded roads, wells and irrigation projects. However, their finding can also be used here given the similarity between PWG and CSF projects.

Another important finding is in relation to the resourcefulness of the PWG. First, a PWG's resourcefulness relates positively and directly to the status and the lucrativeness of state positions held by its heads or key members. Second, the study found that resourcefulness of a PWG also depends on its head's and key members' networks which extend beyond the state, to include also business and even the NGO sector.

While the dollars and cents of the PWG support are interesting facts to know, its political attachment and implications are even more fascinating. The significance of PWGs in the CPP's political strategies indicates the Party's efforts to build its legitimacy, here being developmental legitimacy. Its strategic effort is in turn an indication of the CPP's adaptive strategy and learning. Its 1993 defeat taught the party that it could not win an election by using its administrative control and surveillance alone. That is why, since 1993, the CPP and Prime Minister Hun Sen in particular have provided support to rural development projects.

The survey with the local people indicate that the CPP and Prime Minister Hun Sen have been quite successful in building their desired image: about 56% of the local people think that most of the infrastructure projects in their community were built by the CPP, and particularly by Prime Minister Hun Sen. Whether people's perceptions are correct or not is irrelevant here, for it is the perception itself that matters. The CPP has been trying to send this message to the people: 'CPP and development are one. Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen and development are one,' and it seems that the message has got through to a large extent.

However, the perception needs to be understood in its own context. Cambodian voters in the last four elections have formed their perceptions about the state and authority, and by extension the CPP, based on their life experiences. Still poor, most voters form their own perceptions and make their decisions in a context within which they still struggle on a daily basis with their basic needs. Their perceptions have also been shaped by the fact that they have limited access to the outside world, except through the CPP-controlled media. Added to this, from 1998 onward, with the Royalists fast falling, rural Cambodians have been given fewer choices besides the CPp. All these contextual factors are among the key factors shaping people's voting decisions.

Given all these constraints, however, it does not mean that the Cambodian people have stayed completely passive. Instead, like the Party that has sought to win their supports, people have also learned and adapted. Within their frame of thinking, as just discussed, people start to link their voting rights with their everyday lives. With that, people start to judge a political party by what it can deliver to meet their needs. Such a judgment has, however, been limited to only tangible things and the immediate material support that a political party can provide. In other words, the people have learned and adapted, but only within the narrow circle of their poverty and choice.

The PWG has been the mechanism to raise the funds to meet the people's needs and to prove to them that the Party 'dares to promise, dares to deliver'¹⁰⁰. But what the CPP has done through the PWG is not just to show a long list of delivered projects. As shown in chapter 6, the PWG activities can be best seen as 'a play' put on by the CPP for the people, and through this play, the CPP seeks to build its legitimacy not only through its ability to deliver, but also on religious and cultural grounds.

For instance, by heavily supporting pagodas and having monks present at inauguration ceremonies of its projects, the CPP has been quietly but successfully associating itself with Buddhism, a solid and moral base which its leadership sometime uses to not only boost their image but also attack the opposition's image. One explicit example was when Prime Minister Hun Sen jokingly said the opposition would go to 100th hell for criticizing his building of infrastructure projects. Besides Buddhism, the CPP and its leadership also attempts to identify their activities to certain Khmer traditional values such as those expressed through gift-giving practices at the wedding.

Through its examining of the PWG, this study has learnt more not just about the CPP's relationship with the masses, but also about some of its internal dynamics and affairs. In the PWG, for instance, one can clearly see the importance of leadership, especially that of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Existing studies and party documents support this claim. Prime Minister Cabinet claims that the PWG has been initiated and led by Hun Sen, and that the PWG's focus on rural infrastructure has its root in his rural development policy issued since 1987. Hun Sen's biographers argue more or less to the

¹⁰⁰ This slogan is often used by the CPP. It was heard often during my participation in the CPP's PWG district meeting, June 18, 2008

same effect. While these claims might exaggerate his roles, they are not completely contrary to the findings of this study.

Through the PWG, this study also identifies a kind of incentive structure that the CPP has used to encourage and pressure its members to contribute. There are both soft and hard elements in that incentive system. On the soft side, some of the most forceful motives including homeland-sentiment and merit-making aspirations have been integrated by the CPP into the functioning of the PWG. By so doing, this study argues, the leadership of the Party has encouraged their members to contribute to PWG not only because they are party members, but also because their contributions will build their images as individuals.

On the hard side, the CPP has linked its members' contributions within this shadowy mechanism to their performance as party officials in general. Their party performance, in turn, reflects on their performance as the officials of the state. It is like a performance-based appraisal system, but in the CPP's way. What this shows is a thick overlap between party member performance and the performance of State employees, another indication which confirms how deeply the Party has come to be identified with the state.

To link to the next chapter, it should be noted that, as a dominant party, the CPP does not use one, but a combination of strategies to pursue its interests, especially when it comes to enhancing its legitimacy and control. Among those various strategies, decentralization is identified as one by this study. The next chapter will discuss this argument.

Chapter 8: The CPP decentralizing to enhance its legitimacy and control

The key to the success of a dominant party like the CPP lies subtly in its ability to adapt. The PWG as described and analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7 is an example of how the CPP has adapted itself by using vast patronage networks as a way to mobilize the resources needed to serve its electoral and image building purposes. This chapter will discuss another example of CPP adaptation, which took the form of the party's introducing decentralization into the state and its own administrative structures. In doing so, the chapter addresses the following questions, as derived in Chapter 3:

- What have been the CPP strategies toward decentralization? and
- And how have local legitimization and central control been mixed in those political strategies?

This chapter uses empirical data from various sources to support its argument. Those include existing research findings and survey results, primary field data collected by this study, my personal experiences working on decentralization issues from 2003 to 2007, and my direct involvement in the formulation of the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD) during late 2008 and early 2009. This chapter does not, however, just piece those data sets together. Instead, it attempts to combine them in ways that help understand the dominant party politics in Cambodia.

The argument of the chapter is this: decentralization in Cambodia tells a story in which the CPP maneuvered under the name of institutional reform to establish its local legitimacy, while at the same time, in very subtle and strategic ways, still ensuring the central control over the rural base. The way in which the party approaches the reform also reflects the 'learning by doing' attitudes of its key politicians and policy-makers. These people learn from history, from the experiences of donor pilot projects and from their trial and error approach. This is why, to really understand the politics of the reform, it is important to understand its context, as well as the angle from which the dominant party sees it. The chapter starts off with a brief background of Cambodia's decentralization and sub-national administration.

8.1. Cambodia's sub-national administration – A background

Currently, Cambodian state administration is divided into central, provincial, district and commune levels. This administrative set-up had its origin in the French colonization period. Before the French arrived, the village was the basis of Cambodia peasant society and traditionally, family and kinship were the building blocks of the village. The colonial period's sub-national administration was carried on after the country gained its independence in 1953. During Sihanouk's regime, it seemed that the district was playing the most active role compared to provinces and communes. The districts were serving as the liaison between the national and local levels, supervising central ministries' staff in the district, and police staff (Ebihara 1968). Despite the linkages in this administrative set up, however, the outreach of the state was still limited during the Sihanouk period (Marston 1997:80).

The Khmer Rouge from 1975-79 completely demolished the previous administration structure and divided the country into various regions (Chandler 2008). At the local level, structures called 'agricultural cooperatives' whose three members were holding real power were put in place. In those cooperatives, outsiders were often brought in to rule, especially to break down the previous local bonds of loyalty and patronage (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002:119).

Under the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (i.e. the former name of the CPP from 1979 to 1989), the sub-national administration went through another round of radical change. Following the Communist tradition, the CPP at the time established so-called People's Revolutionary Committees at provincial, district and commune level (Slocomb 2004). The Committees were given five-year terms, with the possibility of being dissolved by the Councils of Ministers, the executive arm of the national government. The provincial level, with the approval of the Council of Ministers, could also dissolve a commune's Party Revolutionary Committees (Slocomb 2004).

Compared to the previous regime, the PRK state exercised strict controls and reached the local level to a much greater extent than more than any other governments before it, with the exception of the Khmer Rouge (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002:117). Partly because of the loosely-defined and loosely enforced formal apparatus, and partly to allow flexibility to deal with the many urgent matters including food shortages and wars with the Khmer Rouge, the sub-national administration at the time was given lot

of discretion by the central level. For the same reason, police, local militia and military dominated at the local level during the PRK period (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002:126-35).

Another phase of change began in 1994. Starting in that year, the Royalist-CPP coalition government was abruptly re-centralizing back its power from the provinces, districts and communes. The intention was to reverse the decentralized and chaotic sub-national administration left over from the previous regime. While still responsible for security matters, in the new set-up, the provinces and districts were relieved of a lot of discretion and resources. Line ministries were pulling back their powers, and exercising budgetary power and control through their de-concentrated arms. Most of the state revenue was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance. In 1998, some budgetary powers were given back, allowing the provincial level mostly recurrent budgets, and a very small provincial development budget (RGC 1998). Under these new arrangements, provincial and district governors were reduced to only delegated officials of the Ministry of Interior (Mol 1994).

Cambodia's sub-national administration stayed virtually unchanged from 1994 until February 2002. The provincial level, having been stripped of its power and provided with only limited resource, was acting mainly as staff of the central level. The district level, even worse, was almost omitted from the administrative map. Administratively, provinces and districts together constitute the middle level between the central and the commune. However, with such a weak middle link, state service delivery had seriously suffered, especially in the priority areas such as education, health and agriculture (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2003).

In February 2002, however, a new change happened at the local level, when the first local election was held to elect 1,621 commune/sangkat¹⁰¹ councils countrywide. A majority of communes in Cambodia at the time had an average population of around 4,000 to 8,000 people. Each commune was to elect a council of seven to eleven members, depending on its population. About 950 women and 10,300 men were elected into these councils. The CPP, while won only a little more than 60% of the votes, claimed about 98.6% of the commune chief positions. The Royalists were obviously in

¹⁰¹ Sangkat refers communes in urban areas. To make it simple, commune is used in this thesis to refer to both rural and urban commune.

decline, claiming only 0.5% of the total chief positions. The new opposition, the SRP, did quite well, replacing the Royalists as the counter-force to the CPP. But the SRP then was still new and weak (Romeo and Spyckerelle 2003).

The commune elections occurred at a time when foreign aid was increasingly flowing into rural development projects throughout the country. Amongst those, a project called Seila (a Khmer term for 'foundation stone') stood out. Seila was initiated in 1993, with the aim of helping returning refugees in provinces along the Thai border. It was first geared at quick infrastructure and settlement schemes rather than sustainable development. However, lessons from that early emergency stage were documented and used to establish a platform for more sustainable and participatory local development practices at the sub-national level. In 1996, a new phase was designed. This time, while still focusing on rehabilitation, the program was expanded to also serve as a pilot for decentralized approaches to planning, financing and implementation of rural development projects (STF 2008).

With increasing donor support, Seila's coverage expanded rapidly to include 500 out of 1,621 communes by 2001. The program also initiated the election of Village Development Committees across Cambodia and the formation of Commune Development Committees consisting of elected village representatives and chaired by the then government-appointed commune chiefs. In collaboration with provincial authorities, the program designed and adopted a system for participatory commune planning and prioritization of development projects as well as financial systems and implementation procedures (STF 2008). What was piloted and expanded then was essentially the establishment of a *de facto* local governance system, which again was successful in securing the buy-in from the government. With its historical significance, it is fair to say that the Seila program was an essential part of Cambodia's decentralization reform and the establishment of the commune councils themselves.

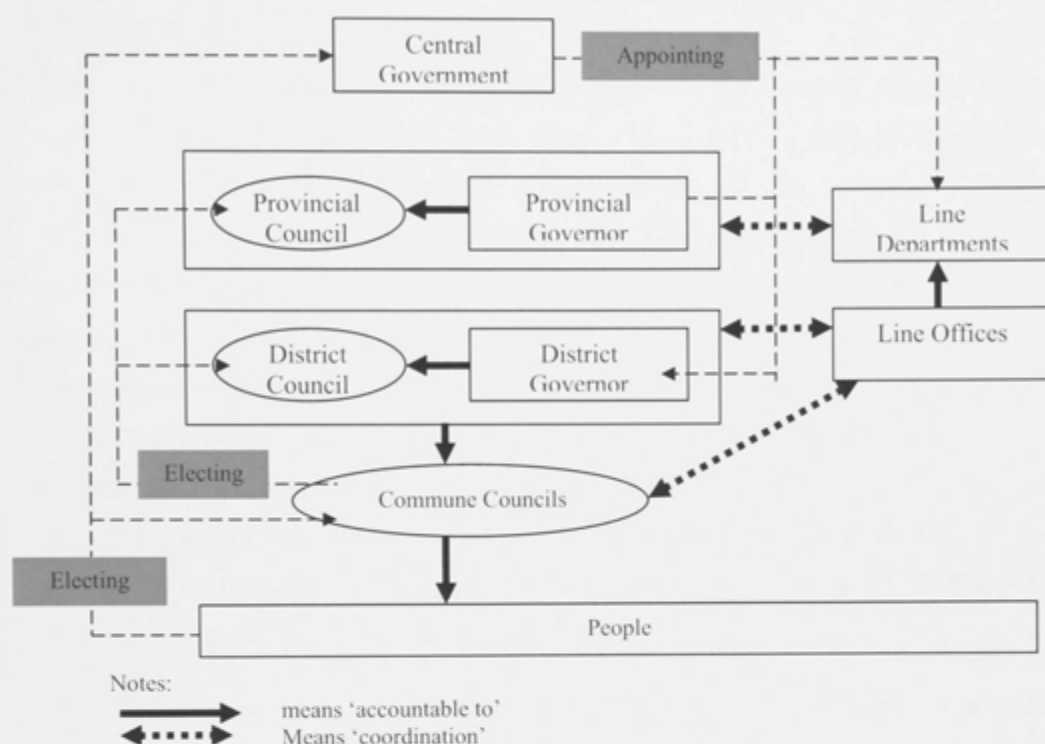
But the establishment of the commune councils did not bring any sudden changes to broader Cambodian politics. Once in existence, the councils were given a very confined zone of authorities. The Commune Law (2001) and subsequent sub-decrees were not sufficiently specific about the roles of the communes, except for the delegated task of civil registration. Lack of functions transferred also meant a lack of financial resources and authority given to the communes. Since 2002, the only source of finance

for a commune has been the CSF, an unconditional grant composed of national budget and donor contribution. The implemented CSF in 2006 was about USD13.2 million, 43% coming from the government, 42% from the World Bank, and the rest from UNDP (STF 2008).

In 2007, the second commune elections were held. Expectedly, the CPP won with a large majority, followed by the SRP, and almost nothing for the Royalists. By that time, when the commune level had been through many stages of reforms, especially in terms of rural development practices, administration at the district and provincial level was still left virtually unchanged from the system introduced in 1994. The district still did not have their own budget, acting essentially as another level of de-concentrated offices of the provinces. The limited supporting capacity of the provinces and districts were further undermined by the over-centralization of budget allocation and management. As indicated in Chapter 5, less than 20% of total national budget was allocated to the sub-national level.

The government was well aware of how detrimental the disempowerment of districts and provinces had been in supporting and building trustworthy and responsive communes. As a response, in a policy statement issued in 2005, the government laid out a vision of a unified administration that needed to be put in place at the two levels, with the intention of promoting the so-called democratic development and better support to the communes (RGC 2005b). In 2008, after intensive discussions, the Law on Administration of Province and District was adopted (RGC 2008d).

Figure 18: Simplified sub-national administrative structure



The new Law calls for a provincial and district council to be *indirectly* elected by the current commune councilors. Up against a tight timeline (i.e. less than one year after the Organic Law was passed), on May 17, 2009, councils for all 24 provinces and 180 districts were elected. Not surprisingly, the CPP, which had the most commune councilors (in this case, they were the electorates) won in all the councils. A council, according to the Organic Law, was supposed to serve as the legislative body for its locality. As with the executive branch, however, the Law calls for the appointment (not election) of the Board of Governors (BOG) headed by the Governor, whose job is to implement the decisions, including budgets, approved by the councils. Although appointed, the BoG is supposed to be accountable to the Council. Once in place, the councils will gradually be transferred more functions, resources, and authority. That transfer will be a long and complicated process which is yet to unfold.

8.2. Decentralization as a legitimization strategy – lessons from the commune reforms

When the CPP-controlled government announced in 2001 that it would hold a commune election in early 2002, some political observers in Cambodia doubted its seriousness and possibility. The reason, these people argued, was that since 1979, the commune had been too important a level of control for the CPP, and as such, it was not in the party's interest to decentralize (noted in Slocomb 2004). Some other observers questioned not only the possibility that the CPP would allow the reform, but also the appropriateness of the whole notion of decentralization within the top-down and hierarchical administration and culture of Cambodia (Turner 2002). Despite these doubts, the reform did take place in February 2002. So why did the CPP become engaged in commune reform? The answer is that, in decentralization, the CPP saw a political strategy to further legitimize and tighten its control. This section focuses on the legitimization part of this reform.

First of all, it is noted that the decision to decentralize dated back to 1994, a year after the 1993 coalition was formed between the CPP and the Royalists. Both parties then saw controlling the state apparatus as the key to consolidating their power. At the national level, they were sharing ministerial posts. The Royalists, being the winners of the election, were taking the Ministry of Finance, which, after the re-centralization of budgetary power from the provincial level, had become influential in the areas of public financial management. In the provinces, they were sharing governor and deputy governor posts. At the district level, however, the power sharing seemed to proceed more slowly, with the Royalists meeting more resistance from the CPP (Doyle 1998). At the commune level, however, the two were discussing and seemed to have agreed on a national election.

As shown in the review of the literature in chapter 2, decentralization can be attractive both to those parties who just come to power and to those that have long been in power. For the new-comers, decentralization is good because it can help wipe out the power base of the previous regime; for the long-time rulers, the reform could help further consolidate their control. The same motive, it seemed, applied to the Royalists (the new-comers), and the CPP (the longer-term ruler) in Cambodia.

Historical facts supported this claim. Since 1993, decentralization has been a policy matter under the umbrella of the Ministry of Interior (MoI). At the time, as a power sharing arrangements between the Royalists and the CPP, the MOI was under two co-ministers, one from the CPP, and the other from the Royalists. By August 1994, the CPP minister had already talked about commune elections, and instructed his staff to draft a commune election law. The Royalist minister also supported the plan (Peou 2000:291).

For the Royalists, this study argues, the commune election presented a real political opportunity at the time. Having just won the national elections in 1993, the Royalists were reasonable enough to believe that it would win the commune elections, which would allow itself to penetrate local administration of the state. Even if it did not win, it could still manage to control a larger part of the rural base, which was then under the complete control of the CPP. For the CPP, the incentive behind its agreeing to push forward the local election came from a combination of factors. First, as the loser in the 1993 election, the CPP could not resist every proposal put forward by the Royalists. Second, it was probable that the election was also in line with its own political interest, for during that time, there were some constitutional legitimacy as well as urgency to be addressed. The following MoI instruction illustrates this point:

Since the Cambodian government was formulated [Sept 1993], it has generally been observed that the commune authorities within some provinces seem to be reluctant to perform their duties and tasks, and that their commitment towards the responsibilities of managing the administration and public security in local areas has [loosened]. The main reason for those [problems] is that they are waiting to see the outcome of the election of commune [authorities] as prescribed in the National Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. (MOI, Instruction no. 324, May 10, 1994, unofficial translation, quoted in Ojendal and Kim 2008b:72).

The CPP had however been strongly resisting power sharing at district level as well as key bureaucratic positions at ministerial level (Doyle 1998). As early as 1997, it was clear that the Royalists had not won much of the control over the state apparatus. Political competition therefore intensified, overshadowing the more micro-reform such as local elections. The tensions eventually led to the internal fighting on July 5-6, which ousted the Prince and drove him out of the country. The CPP managed to keep some international legitimacy by conducting the national election in 1998 which it won (Sullivan 2005). At that time, some were expecting Cambodia to become a one party

state, where the CPP would exercise 'hard politics' (a term used in Ojendal and Kim 2008b) in its domination and allow little space for change.

However, after winning the 1998 election, the CPP put decentralization back on the agenda. There were three important motives for this. First, similar to arguments made by Ojendal and Kim (2008b) and Sullivan (2005), decentralization, when implemented within the stable political climate controlled by the CPP, could be a very beneficial legitimizing act, for both international and domestic audiences. Since 1998, the international community, including the EU and the UN, had pushed the government to 'pursue a policy of decentralization and de-concentration, seen as the most effective means to extend democracy and improve delivery of public services and infrastructure development in Cambodia.'¹⁰² The expectation among donors was that the CPP was useful in ensuring political stability, leaving local-level space for bottom-up political changes, and that is why they (donors) supported decentralization. The CPP saw this as an opportunity to align itself with donor ideologies and expectation.

Staying in harmony with donors also has significant fiscal implication. Since 1993, Cambodia has been receiving increased foreign aid (averaging about USD500 million per year) which was significant for the country's development. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was noticed that more of those funds had been flowing to support rural development projects throughout the country. As previous chapters indicated, rural development was important for the Party in building its development-friendly image and by committing to decentralization, the CPP was expecting that even larger donor support would be made possible to advance this image building objective.

Empirical evidence suggested that this strategy did work. Seila, a development program behind Cambodia's decentralization, for instance, was used as a mechanism for mobilizing foreign aid into Cambodia's rural development. Over the six years of the Seila program's second phase (1996-2001) a total of USD215 million was mobilized, a large share of which came from donor agencies. Increasing donor funding had also been attracted to support decentralization since the 2002 commune elections (STF 2008).

¹⁰² UNDP. Report on the elections of the commune councils. Cambodia, March 2002, p.10, quoted in Sullivan (2005).

Second, local elections were a strategy to clean up the unpopular elements among the current commune chiefs which had been appointed by the CPP since before 1993. Some of the appointed commune chiefs in power thus far were involved to different extents in acts of violence, intimidation and abuse. This was the legacy of the wars and power struggles following the 1993 election. While violence and intimidation carried out by those chiefs were instrumental in winning votes, they were also the main reason why people did not support the CPP. Those local officials were the ones who had enforced conscription, put up illegal checkpoints, and over-exploited common resources¹⁰³. The party recognized that it could not keep on relying upon violence and intimidation to sustain its legitimacy. It also recognized that if it could get good people to be party candidates it would have more success in the upcoming elections.

Third, after winning the 1998 election, the CPP wanted the country to have stability to help facilitate its control. One way to do that was to reduce the possibility of armed confrontations among former enemies at the lower level. The commune electoral system reflects such post-conflict solutions. Despite its growing domination, the CPP agreed to have other parties to be present within the councils no matter how few votes they received compared to those of the winning party. Thus, within a commune council, while the chief position was given to the party that claimed the most votes, the first and second deputies must come from the second and third winning parties (RGC 2001). The intention was to promote cooperation and sharing of responsibilities among different parties (Romeo and Spyckerelle 2003).

¹⁰³ Personal experiences living and discussing with people in rural Cambodia

Figure 19: Commune councils and the party at the local level



The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior making a speech about decentralization reform. To his left, is the Director of the National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD)¹⁰⁴



A typical commune council building.



At the local level, the CPP and the state are very close. It is not uncommon to see that a commune building located close to that of the party, as in the commune shown in the picture.



An accountability box established for a commune. People rarely used it for filing their complaints, however.



A house with CPP logo. This means that the family is not only members but also activists of the party.

So, given all the political calculation and intention expected by the CPP, what has happened with the communes? Has the CPP been able to establish its own legitimacy at the local level as it had predicted? The answer is largely yes. The commune councils

¹⁰⁴ Source: <http://www.ncdd.gov.kh/>

since 2002, according to different surveys, have made a good impression on local people. Unlike the more violent and intimidating commune authorities that people used to experience prior to the 2002, the councils as institutions and commune chiefs as individuals and representatives of the CPP have acquired gentler, more people-friendly images (Meerkerk et al. 2008).

Better understanding between communes and local people has also been noticed. For instance, in a survey, 68% of councilors thought their people needed more roads and other typical rural infrastructure including small scale irrigation and wells, a response which closely resembled the response from the people on the same issues (78% of surveyed people thought the same) (Meerkerk et al. 2008).

The survey by Meerkerk et al also shows that people did see gaps in the councils' capacity to meet local needs, especially in the areas of clean water and irrigation. However, people seem to understand that such gaps exist because the communes have been given limited resources and power. The people surveyed also showed more trust in the commune: most people (about 90%) felt that the communes would perform better if they were given more power and resources¹⁰⁵ (Meerkerk et al. 2008). Moreover, although people's participation in commune decision-making process is still limited, most (about 80%) feel they can access and request information and relevant assistance from the commune chiefs and councilors if they approach them (Meerkerk et al. 2008).

Elite capture has not been a key concern since the commune elections. A majority of people (89%) seem to trust the transparency with which commune councils make decisions and even encouraged that the councils be given more authority in such decision-making process. Yet, it has been recognized that the practices of informal fee payments have been common at the commune level although there have not been any serious complaints from the people (EIC 2006). The informal fee have been quite small: the estimated total informal fee paid to communes is about \$5-6 million, equivalent to 10% of total annual amount of unofficial fees paid by households to all public services at all levels in 2005 (EIC 2006).

¹⁰⁵ This finding is also consistent with a management evaluation study which found that the results of commune performance so far were generally very positive, with over 80% of projects having been delivered (Biddulph 2006 :21). The report also shows insignificant amount of corruption in the use of CSF by the communes (from 1-3%) (p.29).

All in all, local elections have brought a new, more likeable face to the communes. Observations from the eleven communes selected for this study further suggest that, if people like a CPP commune chief, they too would tend to feel positive about the party, the Prime Minister, and by extension, the PWG members assigned to take care of the community. That is why it is not surprising to see that the Party has taken seriously the popularity of its commune chiefs. Such seriousness was strongly confirmed when the party decided to introduce the democratic nomination of their commune chiefs into its internal procedures.

During the first local election in 2002, district governors who are the appointed officials and district party chiefs played key roles in the nomination process. In the second election in 2007, however, the nominees needed to win support from the majority of party activists within the commune¹⁰⁶. The result of this change was quite noticeable: in one province, more than 30% of the commune chiefs left from the first term were voted off the nominee list. And among the eleven communes visited, three had a different nominee for the second term¹⁰⁷.

8.3. Decentralization as a new way of control

The CPP has gained from decentralization and because of that, it was willing to introduce some democratic procedures into the Party, one example of which is the nomination process of local candidates. Despite that, though, it does not mean the Party was fully in favor of promoting local democracy and making the commune councils accountable to the local people who elected them. The same goes for the district and provincial reforms: although it allowed the election of the councils, it does not mean the CPP is in full support of an autonomous provincial and district administration. In other words, the party still seeks to keep sub-national administrations under its control.

8.3.1. The CPP and the commune level

Starting with the communes, it is argued here that, while decentralizing, the CPP has tried to ensure that, although elected by the people, commune councilors were still ultimately accountable to the Party. Various mechanisms have been put in place to achieve this objective. First, within the party hierarchy, the commune chiefs are still considered subordinates to the districts, and this is confirmed by this fieldwork and

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with a provincial CPP chief, June 07, 2008

¹⁰⁷ Fieldwork key informant interviews in the 15 communes

other studies (see for instance Ojendal and Kim 2008a). The district, administratively, is also the immediate boss of the commune within the hierarchy of the Ministry of Interior. This is not to mention the fact that the district has more authority in the field of police and military (Ojendal and Kim 2008a).

Another channel of control is also in place, i.e. that of the PWG. A commune in this structure is like a foot soldier whose role is restricted to mainly suggesting and implementing any decisions made by the head of the PWG. Moreover, from the fieldwork, all the commune chiefs interviewed for this study believed that the PWG is influential in their nomination for the next term, and nine of them perceived that a good relationship with the PWG and the support given by the PWG have been helpful in making them more popular among their local people, i.e. make them look more responsive, resourceful and credible.

However, on this point of what makes a commune chief popular, people surveys reveals different perceptions. To the people surveyed, a chief is popular not mainly because of his connection to the big guy at the central but of because of his characters, including his leadership, honesty, gentleness, perceived fairness in dealing with conflicts and whether he has been involved in exploiting common pooled resource such as forest, fishery and lands. In other words, a respected commune chief is still one that most resembles a typical, respected local leader in the traditional senses.

From this particular finding, it can be argued that, through local elections and selecting popular local chiefs to stand for office, the party has managed to co-opt and make most use of the popularity of local leaders for its own political benefits and legitimacy enhancement. In other words, these well respected commune chiefs and councils have been made the legitimate faces of the party, and therefore, a good strategy to win political supports¹⁰⁸.

This is not to suggest, however, that all the commune chiefs from the CPP are all virtuous. Among the eleven communes visited, two commune chiefs were particularly unpopular (according to the survey with the local people), and in one commune, the CPP had just lost the election because its candidate involved in illegal logging

¹⁰⁸ Actually, it will be shown in chapter 5, the party has also been exploiting other types of local/traditional institutions for their political purposes, the most noticeable of which is the pagodas.

corruption¹⁰⁹. The first two communes, the chiefs were reported to have been involved in problematic community land sales¹¹⁰. However, the scandals did not significantly affect the CPP votes because they did not affect the interests of many people's everyday lives.

8.3.2. The CPP and the district and provincial levels

Since the re-centralization in 1994, the CPP was making effort to ensure its control over the district and provincial levels. While the party was in more agreement with the Royalist party in 1994 on how to reform the commune, it was much less compromising about the power sharing at the district and provincial levels (Doyle 1998). That was because controlling district and provincial levels, unlike the case of the commune level, had different implications for the CPP control over the state. First, districts and especially provinces, are bigger in scale and cover large area of land and resources: Cambodia has up to more than 1,600 communes, but only 180 districts and 24 provinces and municipalities. Second, while district and provincial governors after 1994 were not given much administrative and financial power, they still had some roles in the security matters, although those roles were not as powerful as the period prior to the 1993 election (Ojendal and Kim 2008a).

During the 1990s when the CPP still saw the Royalist party as a political threat, it was important that the party held on its control over these two levels. However, this thesis argues that the CPP did have plan for decentralization reform for these two levels. For instance, the talks about reform at these middle levels were discussed in as early as 2005, only within three years after the commune election (RGC 2005b). However, what seemed to concern the CPP most about reforms were the question of timing and the speed that they should move forward. The best timing for the CPP, this thesis argues, is when it was sure that the reforms would not lead to any destabilization and weakening of its control. That was possibly an explanation why the CPP was really pushing for the district and provincial laws and election after it won big the local election in 2007 and national election in 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Various cases reported in newspapers indicate that sometimes CPP's local officials are involved in scams relating to illegal acts affecting fishery and lake conservation (See *Phnom Penh Post*, August 12, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Key informant interviews, July 12 and October 06, 2008

Provided that the district and provincial reforms do not threaten the CPP's power base, this thesis argues, it is in the interest of the party to push them forward. First, there has been more recognition that the current system is too centralized, the consequence of which was limited support for education and health services¹¹¹. The study observes that to some extent there has been genuine interest among the CPP leadership to see improvements in these social services, partly because they are not immediately threatening and because they can enhance the developmental image of the party. Second, weak middle levels mean little support to the commune level, which in turn might lead to deterioration of the councils' credibility among local people. The commune councils now are like the 'children' of the CPP on the ground. The party therefore must have some incentives to take care and provide more support to them through the middle levels.

However, it is observed from the fieldwork that political incentive to strengthen local governance become much weaker in the areas where there are conflicts over natural resources between vested interest from outside and local communities. These outside interests in most cases are well connected to higher level officials and to the Party, and most of the times these powerful people managed to win over the voices and protests of the affected poor villagers (OHCHR 2007).

The observation about the natural resource conflicts suggest (and as later section will show), the CPP is still much less pro-poor and much less pro-decentralization when there are rent-seeking opportunities (such as natural resource exploitation) involved. This is mainly because with more opportunities to seek rents, more resistance to reform from many vested interests at the central level will also emerge. The resistance will be no doubt a key factor slowing down district and provincial reforms. However, as the reforms just only started, it is hard to know how they will unfold and what the Party will manage them. For the time being, what this thesis can do is analyze how the Party has done with regards to the design and the early implementation of the reform itself.

The reform at the district and provincial level, which started with adoption of the Strategic Framework on D&D in 2005, fundamental and challenging as it is, were designed to favor the CPP's political interests. First of all, the elections of both councils

¹¹¹ Prime Minister Hun Sen's speech, January 28, 2009; Meeting with officials of Ministry of Economy and Finance, June 8, 2009.

were set up in ways and at the time that would guarantee CPP domination in those councils. The Organic Law states that the provincial and district councils are elected by the current commune councilors, a majority (70%) of whom are CPP's. So it would not be surprising to see the CPP win the election.

Still, the result of the 2009 election was somewhat surprising, not because the CPP won fewer, but because it won more votes than from its own commune councilors. According to the election results, the CPP won about 80% of the provincial council seats (equivalent to 302 seats), and about 78.6% of district council seats (equivalent to 2,249 seats). The data from the National Election Committee shows that the party won at least 600 votes from non-CPP commune councilors, about 350 of which are from the SRP. After the results came out, the SRP made many complaints about the CPP using money to buy off its councilors. The complaints did not bring about any changes¹¹². It was hard to confirm whether the allegations by the opposition were true, but there were concerns that the National Election Committee itself, being a part of the Ministry of Interior, was not fully independent from the CPP (Blue et al 2008).

Winning provincial and district council elections was of least concern for the CPP given its political strength at the time. The bigger question is the power relation between the centre and the provinces and districts as entailed by the reform, i.e. whether the last two would be kept in control when it increasingly gains authority. To address this concern, the CPP-led government designed the decentralization reforms in the following way. First, the province in the new setup is given limited power especially in its relationship with the lower tiers of administration, including the district which is now supposed to be accountable to the communes (RGC 2008d).

In addition, in the new set-ups, the provincial, district and commune levels are expected to play different but complementing roles. A province will undertake more of planning and coordinating roles and stay closer to the national level in ensuring the proper implementation of national policy and standards; districts will primarily perform tasks to respond to the commune needs. The key control however is this: each level will have separate budget, all of which are decided upon at the national level through the adoption of the national level budget (RGC 2008d).

¹¹² *Neak Khloimneurl Bulletin*, No. 38, Year 11, June 30, 2009

The central government (and therefore the ruling party) also seeks to ensure that it still has control over the operation of each level of sub-national administration. While the councils are indirectly elected, the BoG, which is like the executive branch and headed by a governor, is appointed by the central government. Although the BoG is supposed to be accountable to the councils, and the councils can propose to have a governor removed, the decision on such dismissal or punishment lies totally with the central government – the Prime Minister, to be specific. The arrangement, as the Prime Minister put it, is uniquely Cambodian and was put in place to ensure ‘a balance of power’¹¹³.

There seems to be different political treatment given to the district versus the province, especially in term of the amount of control from the centre and the Party. The provincial level set-up is intended to reflect more of the central government/ party’s preference, whereas at the districts, more voices from the communes are allowed. According to my key informant interviews, the central government and the Permanent Committee of the party play more roles in deciding on the nomination of the chiefs of councils and the appointment of the governors of the 24 provinces¹¹⁴.

The nomination of a district council chief, however, reflects the preferences and voices of the communes. According to a local newspaper, and later confirmed by interviews with some people at the MOI, the ruling party has been very careful in nominating people to be at the top of party list for the district council elections. What it did was to conduct a poll among the current CPP commune councilors to ensure that whoever got nominated for the head of the (district) council would get the most votes from the party members (i.e. the CPP councilors)¹¹⁵.

That the provincial and district indirect elections would further strengthen the CPP was not hard to see given the indirect election arrangement. The arrangement came under a lot of criticism immediately after it was made known to the opposition party, the donor community and the CSOs. But at about the same time it became clear that the indirect

¹¹³ Prime Minister Hun Sen’s speech, January 28, 2009

¹¹⁴ Also, a powerful governor is a key asset for a central politician – no wonder the Prime Minister Hun Sen has, since before 1993, been active in building his personal networks with these individual governors (Gottesman 2003).

¹¹⁵ *Koh Santepheap newspaper*, January 29, 2009

elections were going forward anyway, the criticisms turned soft and then became supportive¹¹⁶.

Having no real bargaining power, those critics came to see indirect elections as at least their second best solution. For the opposition, the indirect election was its first opportunity to have their people at districts and provinces: as a result of the elections, the SRP now had somewhere between 15 and 20% of the council seats at these levels¹¹⁷. Of course, it is less likely that the SRP would manage to have any of its people on the executive, i.e. the BoG.

The CSOs saw some other opportunities in the indirect elections. Thus far, many CSOs involved in service delivery or advocacy had had one of two choices: to work with the central level which was quite antagonistic towards the CSOs as a group, or to work with the commune or community level, which is far too small to make any impact beyond a community border. Now, with the existence of the district and provincial councils, a new space for interaction was opened up where the CSO can work directly and on relatively bigger scale.

Reforming the districts and provinces, in addition to consolidating and legitimizing the CPP power at these two levels, also allowed the party to appease its long time serving party officials at both levels by sending them to retirement with a smile on their faces. As shown in chapter 5, many people at provincial and lower levels have not been well rewarded financially. Now, many of these people are approaching retirement ages. The party, this study argues, sees the newly established councils and the sub-national administrations, at least in their first term, as a new space into which these retiring people would be 're-deployed' and in the process, make them feel they were being rewarded for their services for the party.

The result of the council elections (from 24 provinces and 15 districts) confirms this argument. The result shows that 14 out of the 24 previous provincial governors were kept in the same posts after the election, while in other cases, deputy governors of resourceful provinces were promoted to be governors of the less resourceful provinces; 14 of the 24 chiefs of provincial councils elected were deputy governors of that

¹¹⁶ *Neak Khloimmeurl Bulletin*, No. 38, Year 11, June 30, 2009

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

province prior to the election. Among the 24 chiefs of councils, two used to be the provincial governors themselves, and the other two were retired MOI officials¹¹⁸.

The result of the provincial election was more like a reshuffle of the CPP staff. Yet, it was made to look like everyone had been given a promotion by the party. In addition, all the 375 newly elected provincial councilors are given 'His Excellency' titles. 'His Excellency' is a well respected social status in Cambodia, although its value has been inflated recently. However, it is a very attractive, even fulfilling, idea for almost all retiring party veterans to be granted this honorific prefix. It is, in other words, what makes those people go into retirement with smiling faces.

8.4. Decentralization as a 'learning by doing' process for the CPP and its people

Learning is central to a successful dominant party in adapting to its changing environment. For the CPP, decentralization provides the best case to demonstrate this point. Writing on the Seila program which was the foundation of the current decentralization, (Rudengren and Ojendal 2002) called the reform 'a learning by doing' process. In later studies (see for instance White 2006; Hughes 2007), such learning aspects were also emphasized. My recent fieldwork adds more empirical findings to this claim.

Decentralization in Cambodia, with its root in the Seila program, involved many actors, and it seemed, almost everyone had experienced a learning curve. Starting with the Seila program itself, some scholars look at it from an aid-effectiveness perspective, therefore, implicitly, emphasizing the learning aspects of the donors and their ways of doing things. Hughes, writing for an edited volume on 'aid that works' (Hughes 2007), praised Seila as a success story in aid management. Key to such success, she argues, was the donors' learning about the importance of focusing on policy and institutional environment and of placing relationship and partnership with the government as its priority.

The people implementing the reform have also been learning. Sub-national level people, including the communes, districts, and provinces, have been put through numerous capacity-building programs, and with that, gradually becoming familiar with

¹¹⁸ Key informant interviews with MoI officials, June 8, 2009

decentralized governance. With the reform, a sense of a system has been growing at the local level, e.g. procedures for local need prioritization, project monitoring and financial management system (STF 2008). All these developments are significant for Cambodia's local administration where a bureaucratic system has rarely taken roots since the French colonization period¹¹⁹.

The CPP and its people have also been learning about decentralization. While donors were learning how to make decentralization work in the post-conflict Cambodia at the time, the CPP was learning about the effects that local elections might have on its power base. Seila program in this sense was an experiment by the government and the party. But the CPP learning about decentralization and local election occurred long before Seila. Since the 1980s, the Party was experiencing with the election of the so-called People's Revolutionary Committee at the commune levels. An undated party document from that period declared the following:

'In order to strengthen the great victory [7 January 1979] and in order to create prosperity in the building of the Kampuchea national... this year, our leaders must fulfill great tasks. First they must hold an election to choose members of the People's Revolutionary Committee of the communes... The election was to make commune a helpful administrative level for the Solidarity Group (*krom samaki*) to deal with the agricultural and food crisis at the time. Various criteria were set to be the qualifications of candidates in the elections, all of which point to three important things: loyalty to the party, being liked by the people and competency and knowledge in the development in their local areas' (Quoted in Slocomb 2004).

While still a communist party, the CPP was also learning how to manage the district and provincial levels in a decentralized manner. Because it was then a one-party state, it is often assumed that districts and provinces must be under tight control from the centre. On the contrary, the two levels at the time were given a lot of economic discretion (Vickery and Amer 1995).

With that discretion, the provincial and district people were developing their own power base and use it for personal rent-seeking. Since 1983, the regional and local militia controlled the production and sales of timber and used their guns to protect illegal logging and trading of the commodity. Ministry of Agriculture for instance, complained about being unable to control these activities and the proceeds generated

¹¹⁹ Meeting with Sak Setha, September 23, 2008

from the timber trade (Gottesman 2003:223-37). It was partly because of that experience that the CPP in 1993 was pushing to have all the fiscal powers of the provinces and districts abruptly centralized (MoI 1994).

Within the CPP, various groups of actors were learning from decentralization. The first group includes some key policy makers at the MoI who have been leading and managing the reform. These people have been learning through their direct involvement in the reform process, as well as their interaction with international consultants, and other forms of capacity-building such as training and fieldtrips to other countries, etc.

These people have been working on sub-national administrative management since before 2002¹²⁰ which means they have a good knowledge about the history about central-local relationships in this country. In addition, they have learnt not only about decentralization per se, but also how to play bureaucratic politics with other line ministries. For instance, from my observation,¹²¹ they learnt what agenda to push and when, which vested interests they should push or avoid, when and on what issues they need to refer to the top leaders for decision-making, etc.

Another group consists of the people from the Ministry of Finance which is not particularly enthusiastic about decentralization. Although agree to create the CSF and allocate budget to the communes, this group is still criticizing decentralization, pointing out to various examples the reform has led to lower efficiency in the spending of state resources¹²². The group was also very skeptical about the district and province reforms. The skepticism was silenced, however, when the Organic Law was passed in 2008, Prime Minister made speech on January 28, 2008, and when the indirect elections were held in May 2009.

This group, while not openly resisting decentralization, has used certain bureaucratic techniques to maintain their budgetary control. One director of provincial finance department told this story very well. Having been a Department of Finance since 1993, the director had observed that, the slow progress with decentralization was not so much

¹²⁰ In my understanding good examples of these individuals might include key individuals working at the National Committee for Democratic Development (NCDD).

¹²¹ Most of the observations were done when I was working in the formulation team of the National Program for Sub-national Democratic Development and through my experiences working as a researcher on decentralization issues since 2003.

¹²² Official meeting at the Ministry of Finance, December 11, 2008

due to the low capacity at sub-national level, but the intention of the centre to centralize power. 'In the past, the leadership [meaning the Prime Minister] has pushed for decentralization on a number of occasions, but the Ministry of Finance was playing tricks to ensure that while 'it let go the head, it still held on to the tail,' he complained¹²³. He gave one good example of a bureaucratic trick:

As with the public procurement, the changing law stated that any procurement of 200 million riels or less shall be done by the provincial department of finance. However, the instruction also stated that if different line departments need to purchase similar items, for example, repair and construction, they all have to be pooled. Most often then, the procurement [after being pooled] ends up with 250 million riels easily. Then the procurement would be given back to the Ministry. So, in a way, they give but they don't really give¹²⁴

The example shows how an agency has learnt to protect its own interests while not appearing as opposing the reform. This kind of game is called bureaucratic learning and bureaucratic politics. Bureaucratic politics, which entails 'learning to play a system,' is not unique to Cambodia. But the game as played out in Cambodia has been largely driven by patronage interests that penetrate the bureaucratic structure itself¹²⁵.

The patronage also increases the importance of personality in policy and bureaucratic decision making process. One concrete example occurs amidst a negotiation between the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Finance regarding local taxes. In an interview, a senior government official of the Ministry of Finance shared his experience that, when the two ministries were arguing about local taxes and how to sequence the own-source revenues reforms, there were heated disagreements in the formal workshops.

After the formal discussion, the ministers of the two ministries assigned him, as a technical person, to meet one-on-one with another supposedly hands-on high ranking official from the Ministry of Interior. What he found was that the disagreement between the two ministries was not really serious¹²⁶. The heated discussion, he noted, was the result of a personality clash, and not so much due to the subject matters.

While there was no way of verifying the story, the story told was not completely at odds with my general observation, both during the National Program formulation

¹²³ Fieldwork interview, December 05, 2008

¹²⁴ *ibid*

¹²⁵ This was mainly during my working in the formulation team of the NP-SNDD

¹²⁶ Fieldwork interviews, December 12, 2008

process and with my long time researching governance issue in Cambodia. Personality, I have long observed, plays a key role in policy-making in Cambodia. This is not to say that in other countries, such personal relations are not important but what is intriguing about Cambodia is the extent to which success or failure of certain policies or agendas relies on personal and informal networks.

In ministries that I had worked with and learned of, one issue that stands out is that real decision-making power in those organizations tends to be concentrated around a few people. When these people are absent – whether they are sick, on holidays, or in another meeting, things would have to stop moving. These few people, moreover, tend to be responsible for too many things. The implication of this for my ‘learning’ thesis is that not only has a small group of individuals come to dominate the policy arena, but the learning itself about such matters has also been limited to that small group.

Such heavy dependency on personality in policy matters mirrors the limited information sharing and coordination with the bureaucracy. The first explanation of this has been the culture of not opening up the state bureaucracy to younger technical people. Hughes and Conway, in their unpublished paper on the policy process in Cambodia (Hughes and Conway 2004) showed that, given the significance of patronage among the bureaucrats, loyalty and ceremony have often been given more weight than technical capacity when discussing policy matters and when a ‘boss’ selects his staff¹²⁷.

8.5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer two broad questions about the politics of decentralization reforms in Cambodia and to relate them to the CPP’s strategies for dominance:

- What have been the CPP strategies toward decentralization? And
- And how have local legitimization and central control been combined in those political strategies?

The following is the concluding answers of this chapter. First, as with the motives for reform, there were many pushing factors, including international community pressure

¹²⁷ The result has been high barriers to technically capable people to get into the government. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that most students holding Master Degree in public administration and development have largely left outside the government working for the NGOs. This is so because the salary within the government is too meager to make a living (about USD30 per month). Those who are willing to get into the Government are those said to have ‘pipes,’ meaning networks and patrons who are expected to share rents.

and the positive demonstration effects of donor-funded Seila program. However, the key motive for the party to adopt decentralization was its learning to appreciate the reform's instrumentality in cleaning up its rural power base and building stronger local legitimacy for itself.

This chapter provides evidence that decentralization has so far been helpful in building the CPP's legitimacy at the local level. Gentler and more developmental faces have come to replace the more violent and intimidating ones of the pre-election local authorities. Having likeable local party officials, it is concluded here, helps build not only local but also national legitimacy for the CPP and its leadership. The low level of elite capture is another positive change of the reform, something that had further accrued credits for the CPP. Having seen the benefits of decentralization, the CPP then made the step to introduce the more democratic measures into the process of nominating its commune and district council candidates. This indicates that decentralization has affected not only the state structure but also the intra-party politics.

Despite the reform, however, the current system is still very centralized, firstly in terms of budgetary authority. The central level still holds on a large share of state budget, leaving those at the sub-national level very limited access to state resources. What the CPP has so far then is a strong rural administrative system, but one which has operated very much at the mercy of the central level's financing capacity¹²⁸.

Despite decentralization, the central level and the party still exercises a lot of power keeping the sub-national and local level under their control: the central government and party still have the final say in party candidate nomination for sub-national elections; that PWG still exercises a lot of power over the communes and districts; and the central level is still the ultimate decision maker on the appointment and dismissal of the district and provincial members of BoG.

The persistent centralization is partly the result of the party's intention to control. But it can also be explained by the power tension among key central ministries (e.g. between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance), a finding which confirms what was partly raised in chapter 5 about elite conflicts within the CPP. This chapter shows

¹²⁸ This is reflected in the arrangement and functioning of the PWG wherein the centre is responsible for financing, while commune and district people work more like foot soldiers.

that central elites, while aware that they belong to the same party, fight in a more quiet way to expand and maintain their domains of power, while avoiding being seen as opposing the directive given from the above.

Another related conclusion is about the learning capacity of the CPP and its people. Previous chapters had discussed different aspects of this topic, e.g. how the party in general terms learnt to adapt from a communist regime to free-market and democratic system (discussed in chapter 4), how it manages state budgets and elites and builds its rural administration (in chapter 5), how it has skillfully devised the PWG to establish its image and legitimacy (in chapter 6 & 7). This chapter zooms in further on this issue of learning, offering some specific concluding remarks.

First, it is concluded here that one thing that CPP and its leadership has learnt is about dealing with different competing forces and, in so doing, finding the right balance between the need for its tight control and for enhancing legitimacy. In pushing decentralization, for instance, the party has to find a balance between demands from the international community on the one hand, and addressing the needs to clean up its own party, and building its own local legitimacy on the other. The reform also involves finding a balance between giving more power to the sub-national levels and keeping them under central control.

Second, the CPP bases its learning on actual doing and a step-by-step process. As with the decentralization reform, it first starts small, learns of its demonstrating effects, and then considers scaling up. For instance, the whole decentralization push first started as a local development project (i.e. Seila) and was then scaled up to a national reform. Another example is how the CPP has gradually reformed its internal party procedures, introducing more democratic measures in the nomination process of commune and district councilor candidates.

However, as the third point, the CPP's and its people's learning has been concentrated among a few key individuals, most of whom are senior, old guard officials. While seniority means more experience being brought into policy thinking, it also means less possibility for a new frame of thinking to emerge. If the CPP's enduring dominance depends on its ability to learn (and, by extension, to adapt), it seems that it will have to

work to recruit and include new and younger minds in its own learning and adapting process.

Similarly, the opposition also seems to be learning. While the Royalists were less successful in competing with the CPP, the SRP has been seen as adaptive enough to make use of the opportunities presented by local and sub-national elections as a way to establish its local presence and get closer to voters. However, as this chapter has shown, its lack of financial resources (which is mainly the result of its lack of access to the state) has made it very difficult to prevent its activists from defecting to (and/or being bought off by) the CPP.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

This thesis set out to better understand dominant party politics within a weak state. Growing academic interest in this political system has been the result of a long time observations that, despite regular democratic elections, some political parties in third world democracies still manage to stay in power, ruling over states that are seen as weak and unable to meet even their own people's basic needs. While many studies have attempted to address this puzzle in terms of those countries' progress toward democracy and good governance, what this study has done instead is to choose a case and empirically study it in order to better understand the underlying dynamics and mechanisms that lead to a party's enduring dominance.

Analytically, the study proposes the 'Party's domination as a system' framework which argues that a party's dominance needs to be understood as a system in which the incumbent party relates to various actors, including the state, elites, opposition, voters, donors and civil society. Such a systemic perspective, the study argues, brings to light the incumbent's adaptive capacity as manifested through the ways in which it manages and makes use of the various relationships with these other actors. Methodologically, the study adopts a single-country case study approach, choosing the incumbent CPP in Cambodia as its case.

Indeed, a party's dominance can be extended to cover various domains of power, including specific areas of state bureaucracy, the economic sectors, the military and the police. This study, driven by the observations it made before the fieldwork, chose to focus on four areas, including: the way the CPP manages state budget, strengthens its rural administration, initiates and funds off budget spending for rural infrastructure projects, and manages inter-governmental relations and decentralization reform. Extensive fieldwork was conducted in Cambodia to collect empirical data on these four areas which were then used to explain the CPP's system of domination.

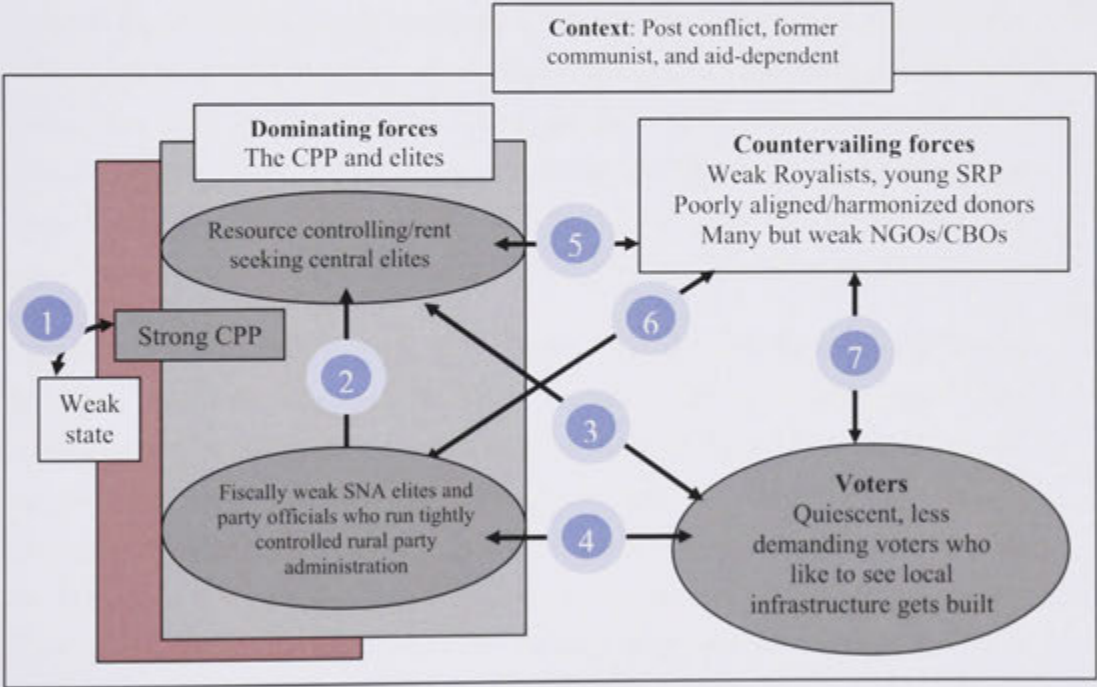
This concluding chapter has four main sections. The first consolidates the findings from the five preceding empirical chapters, reflecting them through the 'Party domination as a system' framework and coming up with systematic arguments as to why the CPP has managed to stay dominant. The second section discusses the usefulness and limitations of the 'party domination as a system' framework, together with a reflection on the

research methods used. The third section takes on the task of presenting specific theoretical arguments underpinning certain aspects of a party's dominance in a weak state. The last section proposes some topics for future research.

9.1. Explaining the CPP's dominance

Based on the 'Party's domination as a system' framework and collected empirical findings, Figure 20 is proposed for the case of the CPP. The basic elements of the diagram reflect what were illustrated in Figure 3 (in chapter 2), namely, the context, the dominating forces, countervailing forces, and voters. What is new is the how the framework has been reflected and contextualized to reflect the case of the CPP in Cambodia.

Figure 20: CPP's domination as a system



The diagram illustrating the CPP's dominance has three important aspects: the first is the dominating forces (on the left side), focusing on how the party has established its so-called 'foundational elements of control'; the second focuses on the countervailing forces and the voters (on the right side); and the third shows the dynamics of the system, focusing on the adaptive capacity of the CPP as found empirically.

9.1.1. Foundational elements of control of the CPP

As reflected in the diagram, this study argues that the CPP is enduringly dominant primarily because of its strong foundational elements of control, here starting with its tight control over the state (relationship 1). First, the party has been in tight control of the state budget (as discussed in chapter 5), which has in turn allowed it to accommodate elite and patronage interests in exchange for their support. The same accommodation strategy, however, has also been the cause of widespread corruption, making Cambodia comparable to a neo-patrimonial state.

On this particular point, the case of the CPP is similar to that of many other dominant parties whose hegemony comes primarily from their incumbency advantages, i.e. those resulting from their control over the state (Green 2009). It is noted that in the CPP case, historical events have led and shaped the ways it has come to gain and maintain such control. As discussed at length in chapter 4, the fact that the CPP came to power as a communist party made the party much closer to the state. As discussed in chapter 5, it seems that even up to the present, administratively, the party-state closeness still persists. In this aspect, the CPP bears some resemblance to the former communist parties in Eastern European countries which managed to maintain their administrative penetration over the states' despite democratic elections (Grzymala-Busse 2008a).

Unique to the CPP case, however, is the ruins of the state over which it came to rule right after the Pol Pot's regime fell. Chapter 4 indicates that the CPP in the early 1980s was essentially starting from scratch in building the state. This historical fact was one of the many explanations of why patronage practices were nourished and became become intertwined with the state, partly as a way to complement the weak state institutions at the time, and partly as a means for personal and group enrichment. Historically, then, in the case of the CPP, the party, state, and the patronage seemed to have been mixed together right from the beginning of its ruling.

As discussed in chapter 5, there are specific, noticeable points about the CPP's strategies to control the state budget. First, it has centralized budget control which in turn has given central elites much more room for rent-seeking, compared to those at the sub-national level. Second, fragmentation in budgetary management is also found to be a key strategy used by the party to ensure that the rents sought are accumulated not in one but different domains of the elites and their patronage. Firstly, this is important for

reducing elite conflicts and maintaining coalitions among them. Secondly, the existence of many and competing domains of power work to prevent the current elites from becoming too powerful to challenge the current leadership.

Although no studies have been identified using a dominant party perspective to understand budgetary management in a weak state, many studies have looked at this topic from public financial management and neo-patrimonial perspectives (Cammack et al. 2007; Schiavo-Campo 2007). These studies indicate that budgetary centralization and fragmentation and associated corruption is not uncommon in other weak states especially some in Africa. That said, however, it is still important that budget centralization and fragmentation in Cambodia be understood within the political and administrative changes since 1979, particularly the power competition between the CPP and the Royalists (see chapter 4) and the changing back and forth between decentralization and centralization since 1980.

Budget centralization has produced a sort of intra-party vertical fiscal imbalance (relationship 2), where a small number of central elites benefit a lot from their control over a large share of the state budget, while the numerous 'foot soldiers' at the sub-national level have been given fewer of such opportunities. Even with such vertical fiscal imbalance, however, the CPP still manages to expand and improve the effectiveness of its rural administrative capacity. This implies when talking about rural politics, it is not just money, but also other factors that matter. These other factors include the party's control over the administrative domains of power at the local levels (i.e. commune chiefs and village chiefs), its tightly controlled administrative units which reach down to sub-village (called 'group') level, and equally important, its co-optation of key domains of influence in the rural areas, including the pagoda and its committees (see chapter 5).

The CPP, having its origin as a communist party, has been serious about building its rural power base. Actually, it started to do this shortly after it came to power in 1979. That most of its senior people have their origins in peasantry society and that many of them still keep frequent contacts with their villages (through the PWG) has kept the CPP close and well-informed about rural politics and voters. In addition, the CPP has also used decentralization to further legitimize its rural legitimacy and clean up unpopular party members (see chapter 8). The CPP's care in building its rural power

base however is not uncommon. Other ruling parties such as that in Uganda in the 1980s had done similarly, i.e. holding local elections to ensure its local legitimacy and purge unpopular party members (Manor 1999; Ndegwa and Levy 2003).

Control over the state gives the CPP another political weapon which is inaccessible to the opposition: control over the media. As indicated in chapter 5, the CPP controls most of the radio and TV channels, especially the ones that reach rural people. Through these mouthpieces, it has been able to constantly pour out political messages about how good it has been and how bad its competitors have been. Emphasized in those messages is the CPP's contribution to rural infrastructure development which has largely been funded through the PWG. The PWG in this sense serves as another political weapon which was made possible because the CPP has been controlling the state and elite networks. More detailed conclusions about the PWG will be discussed later.

9.1.2. Voters and countervailing forces

Popular support and legitimacy are important for the dominant CPP (relationships 3 and 4). That support, while shaped by the manipulative strategies of the incumbent, is also a function of the people's perceptions. In the case of Cambodia, firstly, a majority of voters with whom the CPP has dealt since 1993 are those who had experienced war and have been passive and less demanding of the government. This popular characteristic however is not uncommon in a post-conflict situation where people are not only less demanding but also unable to mobilize collective actions to make their voice heard by the state (Oosterom 2009).

Given their low level of expectations, Cambodian voters seem to have been easily pleased, especially with tangible projects offered to them and their communities by the CPP and its elites. This means little pressure on the state (and by extension, the CPP) to adopt reforms needed to ensure better service delivery. Such low expectations have also allowed the CPP to use off-budget redistributive channels (such as the PWG) to deliver certain types of rural development in exchange for popular support (as discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7). That people tend to give high value to tangible projects also reflects their limited knowledge and access to information about what they can expect of the state, which again is just another common feature found among peoples in post-conflict countries (Oosterom 2009).

The ways Cambodian people perceive and interact with the state also reflect prevailing cultural values which are also found in other Southeast Asian states. For instance, they tend to see their leaders in a more paternalistic perspective (i.e. as their patrons) rather than politicians or bureaucrats from whom they can demand accountability. Similarly, reflecting the prevailing Buddhist practices, people also see the benevolence and merit-making acts of leaders as respectable acts (discussed in chapters 6 and 7), a finding which has been said of other Buddhist Southeast Asian countries (Pye 1985; Vatikiotis 1998). The finding about the CPP's trying to present its PWG activities as a political play (chapter 6), moreover, holds some resemblance to what (Geertz 1980) describes as theatre states in Bali.

This study finds that the CPP has been very successful in terms of gaining popular support. However, it is not yet conclusive as to how secure the CPP is on this matter. Although the party is arguably in control over virtually everything (i.e. the state, the elite, private business, rural administrative network), the number of votes (not of parliamentary seats) that it has won does not convey the same sense of overwhelming superiority. The CPP's own electoral record shows that it polled 58.11 % of the votes in the 2008 elections (CPP 2008a).

The percentage is impressive for a party's performance at an election, especially when compared to the 1998 result when it won only 41.42 % (CPP 2008a). However, the figure also indicates that, although the CPP is so dominant, more than 40 % of the people did not vote for it when it was at its peak. It indicates also that the impressive 90 out of 123 parliament seats that it controls do not entirely reflect its popularity, but are partly the result of an electoral system and seat allocation formula which favors the big party. In another word, the system allows the incumbent CPP to win more parliament seats than it did with the number of votes, and the oppositions to win fewer seats than it did with votes (Blue et al 2008). On this point, the CPP case is similar to other dominant parties which tend to manipulate electoral rules (including formulas for parliamentary seat allocations) to their advantages (Schedler 2002).

Another caution for the CPP is the demographic change among voters in the coming elections. It is estimated that, by 2013 (the next election), about 50% of the electorate will have been born post the Khmer Rouge, and by the 2018 election, this proportion will increase to about 70%. Urbanization is also a factor, but more gradual: 17.6 % in

1998 to 19.5 % in 2008 (Adler and Craig 2010). The questions remain as to whether these post-war and more urbanized people will articulate higher demands on the CPP-government to perform and whether such demands will be strong enough for the ruling party to adapt in order to accommodate.

The CPP's success also reflects its dealing with countervailing forces which include opposition parties, donors, and civil society (relationships 5 and 6). First, the party's rise has been facilitated partly by weak and young opposition parties, starting with the Royalists and later on SRP. As in many other dominant party politics (Rakner and van de Walle 2009), these opposition parties are weak mainly because they do not have access to the state's resources. On top of this fiscal disadvantage, oppositions in Cambodia also show other signs of weaknesses, including their vulnerability to the CPP's divide and rule strategies, and their lack of familiarity with rural politics (discussed in chapter 4).

The SRP, being the only credible opposition left standing and despite its improving electoral records since 1998, still has a lot to do. That includes building its administrative structure at all levels, preventing its membership from defecting to (or allegedly being bought off by) the CPP, protecting its leadership from constant lawsuits and threats by the incumbent. While fighting an uphill political contest at the central level, the SRP, with some success, has pushed its efforts to win more votes at local elections (see chapter 8). However, the SRP, without access to state resources, still finds it very hard to gain more votes from the people (relationship 7) who tend to appreciate politicians' ability to deliver infrastructure projects. As in many other dominant party politics (Schedler 2006), limited access to the media only adds to the opposition's electoral disadvantages.

In Cambodia, (as in many other aid dependent countries (Bräutigam 2000)), Western donors have been complaining about governance and corruption issues but their conditionality has often been weakly enforced. The common donor alignment and harmonization problems aside, donors in Cambodia have had to face the reality that for the moment, the CPP is not only dominant but also seems to be the only party that can keep post-conflict Cambodia from falling back into chaos and civil wars (Cock 2010). Concerns have also been raised lately about whether the Western donors' influence will increase along with their aid. The reason for this concern is the increasing aid from

China to the CPP-government with no strings attached.¹²⁹ That said, the CPP is still in need for the support from Western donors, partly to ensure its international legitimacy and the significant foreign aid (see Chapter 5)¹³⁰.

Experiencing difficulties in pushing for key reforms at the national level, donors have put more emphasis on their intervention at the local level. This in practice means more donor support being given to local governments, pushing for decentralization reforms, and providing assistance to NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs)¹³¹. The NGOs and CBOs, non-state actors in Cambodia, are still young and their roles both as countervailing forces to the state (and the party) and as catalysts to promote popular capacity to demand more accountability from the state are still limited (see chapter 5). Similar challenges however have been found in other post-conflict countries (Oosterom 2009; Scott 2009),

9.1.3. Adaptive and learning capacity

Discussed in the first sub-sections of this chapter was an analytical presentation of the current state of the CPP's dominance. What makes it evolve into such state, this study argues, is the dynamics of the domination system, at the centre of which is the CPP's adaptive and learning capacity. There are a number of points to be made about this.

First, as discussed in Chapter 4, the CPP's adaptive capacity can be said to be the result of three decades of 'on the job' training and trial and error: it came to power in 1979, and practically learnt how to set up a state and party administration while fighting wars on the border; when Communism fell, the party (and some of its people) learnt not just about how to transit into a free market economy and how best to position themselves to exploit from such transition; in the first elections in 1993, it learnt to deal with electoral politics, by not only learning to lose (a term used by Friedman and Wong (2008)) but how to win again.

Existing literature about the CPP suggests that the CPP's learning has not been confined to any specific ideology, but reflects a certain kind of pragmatism in the ways

¹²⁹ *Voice of America (VOA) radio*, May 04, 2010

¹³⁰ At the latest foreign aid meeting, for instance, development assistance was promised at more than US\$1 billion (VOA, June 02, 2010)

¹³¹ An example of this supports is the project on Civil Society and Pro-Poor Markets Component (CSPPM) of the Natural-Resource Management and Livelihood Programme (NRMLP), or a recent EU program called Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Civic Engagement (SPACE) of Democratic Councils in Cambodia

in which it adapts. While pragmatism is used to mean non-ideological, the literature leaves this particular notion pretty much to whatever interpretations readers incline to have. Based on its newly collected empirical data, this study takes this point a step further, arguing that the CPP has successfully adapted by seeking to manage the seven relationships proposed in the framework (Figure 20).

Without running the risk of repeating what has already been discussed in section 9.1.1 and 9.1.2, this section argues that central to the CPP's managing those seven relationships is its constant search for the right a balance between control on the one hand and legitimacy on the other. Such balancing act is found to be central regardless of what level being discussed. For instance, the CPP's dominance per se can be said to be the constant adjustment between the party's seeking to control the state and the elite (relationships 1 and 2) on the one hand, and dealing with the voters and countervailing forces on the other (relationships 3 to 7).

A balancing act is also needed (and was indeed found) in the ways in which the CPP manages specific areas of its domination. For instance, in managing inter-governmental relations, the party needs to find a balance between appeasing the central elites and the numerous local party activists (and it seems that, fiscally, such a balance still needs to be found (see Chapter 5)). In running its rural administration, a balance is also involved between tight control and surveillance on the one hand (e.g. setting up 'group' units), and legitimacy on the other (e.g. a popularly elected commune authority).

Talking about balancing act as an adaptive strategy, the most interesting empirical evidence about the CPP is its use of the PWG. This shadowy mechanism is a good example of how the CPP has innovatively used a middle way to mix together both its control and legitimizing strategies. While continuing to control the state and allowing patronage to flourish, the CPP has used this PWG as a way to tap into its people's accumulated wealth and use it to build its own image in the face of the people.

Understanding about the PWG has allowed this study to understand some of the internal dynamics of the CPP, further substantiating the claim about adaptability. First, it has learnt that leadership (especially that of the Prime Minister Hun Sen) has been important for the party to take innovative measures especially at a national scale. On the one hand, this finding is not that different from what is also said of many other

dominant parties (Friedman and Wong 2008a). On the other hand, however, Hun Sen's role should not be under-estimated, given that the very PWG mechanism itself was initiated by him and that since 1998, more than 3,000 schools (and hundreds of rural roads, and bridges) built by the PWGs bear his name (Cabinet of Prime Minister 2008).

The second point is the incentive structure that the party has put in place to encourage and pressure its members to contribute. As soft incentives, the party has integrated some of the cultural and traditional values such as homeland-sentiment and merit-making to encourage members' contributions to the benefit of the party and its leadership. On the hard side, the Party has linked its members' contributions within the PWG to their performance as party officials in general, which in turn reflects on their performance in the government agencies. It is like a performance-based approach in the CPP's ways. It also shows a very close overlap between party and state official performance, which is another indication of how deeply the CPP has come to be identified with the state.

The incentive system in the PWG is an indication of a proven pragmatism favored by CPP leadership. Prime Minister Hun Sen and his men have learnt from their experience that a system will not work if there is no money or incentive in it. This was exactly what Prime Minister Hun Sen said in the late 1980s when his regime was considering economic liberation reform. Another interesting aspect of this pragmatism is that, when it comes to money, the party seems to care less about what such a system might look like, at least in a formal sense, as long as it delivers results. The Prime Minister Hun Sen's recent speech was indicative of this point. During a 2007 televised speech, Prime Minister Hun Sen told a revealing story. He was responding to criticisms of his government's tax and customs regimen.

A Chinese lord, he related, faced a revenue crisis which meant he would not be able to pay his imperial tribute. A leading court mandarin advisor proposed raising taxes on the peasantry, and another advised sending subjects to mine the gold. Both were rejected as inefficient, unpopular and requiring unavailable time and manpower. But a third advisor asked for just twenty soldiers and a few days to solve the problem, and, in quick time, he duly returned with the gold. It had been procured by simply taking the soldiers and going from house to house around (other) high mandarins' residences (quoted in Craig and Pak 2009). This story sheds light on the functioning of the PWG.

However, comparing the Chinese lord story to the PWG does not mean that the latter is not systematically set up. Instead, it has been highly systematic, and yet shadowy and its accountability structure is highly result-oriented.

Despite its many interesting characteristics, the PWG however has some inherent limitations in term of its contributions to rural development. It has been helpful in financing small-scale one-off capital investments such as constructing schools, roads, pagodas and canals, but it has great difficulty meeting the recurrent spending needs such as repairs and maintenance, personnel and operational spending. It might not be able to meet one-off investments which require big capital such as that needed for irrigation schemes. It has also been poor in terms of sustainability and regional equality. All of these lead to an argument that the PWG-like funding support will not be able to replace the state-mechanism for public service provision. The question however is whether such limitations of the PWG will be transformed into incentives or pressure for the party to accelerate state reforms, namely, the budgetary and decentralization reforms to fill the gaps.

The way the CPP approaches decentralization reform indicates another adaptive and learning capacity. In decentralization, the CPP has managed to use an institutional reform to achieve its local legitimacy without easing up on its central control – or, at least, not yet. In other words, through the reform, the party has attempted to manage relationship 2 and relationship 4.

That decentralization has been managed in ways that benefit the CPP does not mean it also brings benefits to the local people and/or the sub-national levels. Actually, the current centralized fiscal relationship has prevented local authorities from being responsive to local needs which in turn can undermine their (people's) trust in the local authority and, by extension, the party. Identifying this potential concern, the CPP-led government has recently pushed to decentralize provincial and district level (see chapter 8). A lot remains to be seen, however, as to how and how far this new phase of reform will go. The progress of this next step will surely alter the nature of intra-party relations (relationship 2) and the perception and support that people will have on sub-national levels and local authority (relationship 4).

Third, the CPP's dominance will depend on its continued adaptation, some of which has already been noticed. On September 14, 2009, for instance, the CPP's central committee issued an order advising its branches throughout the country to classify all households within their locality into 'CPP families,' 'other party families,' and 'activists of other parties.' These will be marked, respectively as 'white,' 'grey' and 'black.' The document orders party members to 'do whatever they can' to change black to grey and grey to white. It orders the deputies and chiefs of commune councils to strengthen their teams and organize a clear plan to carry out the order¹³². In addition, on March 18, 2010, the CPP issued another order setting up the 'Quick Reaction Youth' group whose responsibility is to respond to 'political attacks from the opposition party' at the local level¹³³. It remains to be seen how effective these mechanisms will be.

The recent decentralization at district and provinces is another possible sign of the CPP's continuous adaptation. CPP, this study predicts, will need to face the challenges that come from a small group of central elites controlling a large share of resources, leaving very little to those at the sub-national level. The current vertical fiscal imbalance is too obvious to last. There have been increasing complaints from province, district and commune level about the current overly-centralized system especially in terms of budgetary authority. The sub-national level, which has been like the foot-soldiers, felt they have been given too little, and not commensurate to the services they have provided for the party. If the demands from below get stronger, they might well create an intra-party incentive for the CPP to push ahead the reform at provincial and district levels. It is not sure yet, however, how this will turn out.

Recent broader political development has given mixed signals as to the direction of the CPP's adaptation, especially in relation to pro-poor reforms. On the positive side, the CPP has been pushing for the adoption of the long-awaited anti-corruption law¹³⁴. At the same time, however, reports have been replete with the problems with the current judicial system, saying that the flaws are too numerous and that the courts have been used as political tools by the ruling party¹³⁵. With this, the government critics add further that the anti-corruption reforms lacks the teeth to root out the country's endemic

¹³² *Voice of America (VOA) radio*, May 19, 2010

¹³³ *Phnom Penh Post newspaper*, May 18, 2010

¹³⁴ *Phnom Penh Post Newspaper*, April 30, 2010

¹³⁵ *Phnom Penh Post Newspaper*, June 18, 2010

corruption¹³⁶. Prime Minister Hun Sen also said that his government will push for deep governance reform¹³⁷. But will all these be just paying lip-service to secure increased foreign aid?

Because the CPP's (and the state's) decision-making is still centralized within a small group of individuals at the top, this study argues that its adaptive and learning capacity as a political organization is in turn a function of the learning and will of that small group. And because that group is still dominated largely by the old guard, sooner or later, the Party will have to address the need for attracting new, young minds and prepare them for future leadership so as to avoid leadership transition problems.

This question about leadership succession is a big concern for the CPP. As this study has shown, at times, it seems as if the story about CPP dominance is also the story of the personalization of power under the Prime Minister Hun Sen. But it is also hard to distinguish the person from the organization because both complement each other. Sometimes, rumors have been heard about factional problems within the CPP which indicate that the Prime Minister, while powerful, cannot always use his power as he wishes¹³⁸.

At some other times, however, it seems that the Prime Minister is so powerful that his power becomes a myth. Even he himself is seen to be trying to create such myth. Recently, for instance, the Prime Minister on several occasions was telling stories about a peasant king from the 15th century named Sdach Korn and seemed trying to portray himself as an incarnation of that king¹³⁹. The similarity between him and Sdech Korn, he said, was that both rose from humble origins to topple the then-king and stayed enduringly in power. Is this a form of re-invention of tradition to further legitimize and consolidate his power? Or is it just something to serve his own self-gratification? Whatever it might be, people are looking and asking hard questions as to what happens after Hun Sen is gone, the question that the CPP itself more than any others, need to find an answer.

¹³⁶ *Voice of America (VOA) radio*, June 02, 2010

¹³⁷ *ibid*

¹³⁸ *Cambodia Daily Newspaper*, February 08, 2009

¹³⁹ *TVK*, November 30, 2009

9.2. Reflection on the framework and method

The proposed framework on 'Party's domination as a system' is considered here as a key contribution of the study to the broader literature. The study wishes to highlight its usefulness and limitations after having used it to explain the CPP case.

As indicated in Chapter 2, various scholars have attempted to identify a number of factors that help explain why a political party manages to stay so dominant. These scholars, individually, however tend to focus on one or two of those factors; some focus on elite coalition, some on incumbency advantages. Such a narrow focus is undoubtedly useful in providing in-depth insights about specific areas of a party's dominating strategies. The same focus, however, fails to capture the bigger picture and the broader dynamics which has led to enduring dominance of the party.

Realizing such a limitation, some scholars have already attempted to construct a more systematic and holistic picture of how a dominant party operates. Schedler, for instance, has worked on the 'menu of manipulation' (Schedler 2002), Friedman and Wong on the different factors that defines a party's adaptive capacity (Friedman and Wong 2008a), and just recently, Schedler has introduced a model of 'manipulation dilemma' (Schedler 2009). Insightful as they are, however, these studies tend to present their arguments in the form of a listing of what a dominant party usually chooses to do rather than systemic explanations as to why, and more importantly, how the party chooses to do things the way it does.

This study, with its proposed framework, focuses on the dynamics that underlie relationships among key actors, namely, dominating forces, countervailing forces and voters. With its holistic perspective, the framework is argued to be useful for its simplicity and its ability to capture the bigger dynamics by showing how those relationships complement or create trade-offs among themselves. The key implication of this approach is that it tells us not only what aspects of a party's domination one should look into, but also how they might interact.

Another implication is that it allows a study like this to come up with a different perspective on what it is that defines a party's adaptive capacity. Such capacity, the study argues, lies not only in its ability to manage specific relationships, but also the synergies and trade-offs among them, taking into account the changing surrounding

contextual factors. As the previous section already mentioned in relation to the CPP, simultaneously managing those different relationships involves finding constantly-changing balance points, an endeavor which requires huge amount of vigilance and constant learning.

As a limitation, however, the framework can be useful only when it is properly contextualized. Different contexts imply different political and socio-economic factors that might affect the nature of the actors involved as well as the relationships among them. Taking Cambodia as an example, the country's historical events and certain cultural and traditional values (such as hierarchy, religion, post-conflict imperatives, etc) play very important roles that contribute to the CPP's rise, how it manages the elite at different levels, and more importantly, how it relates to the masses. Contextualization is also needed because domination reflects adaptability, which in turn reflects learning. And learning is a highly contextual phenomenon.

To contextualize the framework, this study argues that a single-country comparative study approach is particularly helpful. Of course, an inherent limitation of such approach is its lack of generalizeability. However, a case study is still a good choice because it can better explain the relevant causal *mechanisms* – not so much about causal effects – that lead to a party's dominance. A case study, when well guided by an analytical framework, allows for in-depth questioning into certain causal relationships without losing sight of why such inquiries are relevant to the broader question of party dominance.

For instance, with in-depth case inquiries, this study has been able to produce empirical findings about the unique *mechanism*, the PWG. Such findings, this study argues, would not have been possible with a multi-case comparison approach. This is mainly because the very existence and operation of the PWG are highly contextualized, incorporating not only the fiscal but also cultural elements such as the homeland sentiment of the elites, rural people's tendency to appreciate rural infrastructure, rural politics and domains of power and the notion of the PWG as a political play put out by the party, etc. These less obvious attributes of the PWG are crucial to the better understanding of the CPP and its people.

The case study approach also allowed the study to come up with the findings about 'resourcefulness' (of the PWG, and by extension, of the CPP) explaining *how* the incumbent has established its fiscal advantages based on its control over the state and elite coalition. The finding about fiscal interlinks among the state, the patronage, and party, is a contribution to the study of public financial management and related governance issues in dominant party politics in a weak state (more on this shortly).

My argument for a case study approach, however, does not mean that many-case and few-case comparative approaches are not valuable. Actually, the guiding framework that this study adopts is derived mainly from few-case comparative studies. However, given the newness of the field, in-depth case studies are still needed mainly to establish new hypotheses and the basis for questioning existing assumptions. As Whitehead (2008) and Snyder (2006) argue, the current debate still needs more knowledge about the so-called extra-electoral elements to better understand non-democratic regimes and their evolution. An in-depth case study, with proper conceptual guides, can help unearth those extra-electoral elements.

A case study is most productive, this study further suggests, if the researcher has long experience and knowledge about the case. This is because, to capture the dynamics of certain causal relations, it requires more than just collecting existing quantitative data, which is often lacking in developing countries. New pieces of empirical evidence tend to come from key informant interviews and observations, the skills which require that the research has well connected networks of key informants. Preferably, he or she should also have good command of the local language and culture, and more importantly, a certain level of informed judgment. Another important fieldwork lesson is the importance of being iterative and allowing sufficient flexibility for changing research questions from what was originally planned. To some extent, the fieldwork itself should be designed to not only collect empirical evidence to answer the original research questions, but also to allow adjustment to the questions themselves.

9.3. Specific theoretical contributions

9.3.1. On patronage and neo-patrimonialism

In addition to the proposed framework and empirical findings, the study also comes up with specific arguments about a dominant party within a weak state. The first argument

relates to the questions of elites and patrimonialism . This study argues that, similar to the cases of developed democracies such as Japan and Singapore, elite and patrimonialism are central to the endurance of a dominant party in the context of a weak state. In this context, the party usually allows elites and their patrimonial networks to seek rents from the state, and using the state resources in clientelistic ways to gain votes. The difference, however, is the extent to which such networks penetrate and seek rent from an already weak state.

Where formal state institutions are weak, the party relies so heavily on informal institutions and rent-seeking to ensure its control over the state. The reliance is so heavy that the situation becomes comparable to a neo-patrimonial state. In this context, then, the formal state institutions become significantly substituted by patrimonial interests and ways of doing things. In the process, the state gets fragmented into various domains controlled by various factions of elites. In this sense, the neo-patrimonialism literature is particularly helpful in explaining dominant party politics.

As a contribution of this study, it argues however that the neo-patrimonialism concept has certain shortcomings. First, the concept seems to over-emphasize the self-enrichment function of the patrimonial practices, and loses sight of the bigger picture wherein patrimonialism and elite networks are not just seeking rent but also serving as a power base of the ruling party. In other words, the concept obscures the systemic dimension of the party-state-patronage linkage. Second, neo-patrimonialism, with its emphasis on the predatory nature of patronage, tends to identify all informal, patrimonial institutions as nothing but corrupt and thus cannot lead to any good. This study argues with empirical evidence that sometimes, informal institution such as the PWG can actually do something pro-poor as well.

With these shortcomings, the neo-patrimonial concept is less likely to capture the important aspect of elite coalition and management in dominant party politics. Allowing elites and their patrimonial networks to seek rent from the state is one thing, but making sure that their conflicts do not destabilize the party itself is another and even more challenging task for the party. This means that it is not just rent-seeking, but also rent-sharing that is involved. The CPP's management of the state budget and the questions about centralization and fragmentation are good examples of this rent-seeking and rent-sharing.

By examining the PWG, this study agrees with van de Walle (2007) who argues that the electoral politics might make the elites and their patronage more responsive to the masses. The PWG itself is a good example of how patronage-based rent has been mobilized to support development projects so as to win support from the masses. In doing that, the patronage has to find ways to raise more resources to accommodate mass preferences. However, arguing that patronage becomes more mass-responsive only to gain votes from the people (as van de Walle (2007) does) is incomplete. The case of the PWG strongly suggests that there are many other non-monetary and non-electoral factors at work as well. Certain cultural inclinations of both the elites and the masses such as the notion of benevolence, homeland sentiment and religions, are all key factors shaping the dynamics of the PWG. This reinforces my earlier point about the importance of context when trying to understand dominant party politics.

9.3.2. On budgetary control and legitimacy

Another contribution of the study is on the budgetary implications of dominant party politics. In a weak state, especially a post-conflict one, the budgetary system is weak, both on the revenue and spending side. Donors have made efforts to help reform the budgetary system, but the progress has been limited. On this point, this study partly agrees with the argument that such slow progress reflects the fact there are too many tasks to be done and thus require more time.

However, in the case of Cambodia, the slowness also comes directly from the nature of state-party-patronage relations within the system. As argued earlier, elite coalitions and patronage play a key role in dominant party politics, and this role is even more significant in a weak state. Introducing reform means that such patronage interest will be affected and thus is seen as potentially threatening to the very foundation of the party's power base.

A dominant party not only resists budget reforms but also tries to make sure that the opposition does not gain access to the budget and other types of state resources. This fiscal disadvantage is the key explanation for why oppositions tend to be weak. They are weak not only because they do not have the back-up of the state, but because, without state resources, they are less effective in forming a solid and reliable elite coalition.

A weak state, a self-enriching elite and patronage, and the need to respond to the preference of the voters, altogether make off-budget transactions (the PWG is a good example) rather tempting for the party. Such off-budget spending constitutes a kind of re-distribution in a patronage-based, not state-based manner. But it is not just the fiscal re-distribution that is altered; the overall governance of the state itself is also affected.

The fiscal pressure entailed by the evolution to mass-patronage has been translated into a proliferation of patronage-based rent-seeking from the state. As it is understood that at least part of the rents will be used to further the interests of the party, politicians in that case has a real incentive to allow rent seeking to expand. The result is the further deterioration of the state institution itself. Rule-based bureaucracy would have to be compromised, and politicization becomes an undeniable fact of life. At stake is the capacity of the state to meet fiscal demand to provide basic services to the people.

The existing literature on budgetary management and reform tends to focus only on the *formal* budgetary stream of the state. Their usual finding is that a country's fiscal capacity is weak because of the weak *formal* budgetary institutions, lack of political incentives and prevalence of patronage. These claims are not wrong, but they seem to miss the bigger picture because they do not well capture the existence of other budgetary streams that happens *informally*, or *off budget*.

This study argues that there are at least three budgetary streams: (i) a patronage-based fiscal stream aiming at accommodating mass preference (such as the PWG), (ii) an elite-based fiscal stream benefiting only a small group of elites (as often happens in neo-patrimonial contexts), and (iii) a state-based fiscal stream delivered through the formal state-bureaucracy.

A dominant party is strong because it is able to control these different budgetary streams. Such ability in turn comes from its control over both the state and the elite/patronage. The three fiscal streams, moreover, do not exist in complete separation. On the contrary, they are connected, compromised and complementary. Inherently, the patronage and the formal budget streams are in conflict with one another. Patronage rent seeking will inevitably reduce the ability of the state to mobilize resources into the national budget. Similarly, while a state budget is intended to re-distribute benefits to the people, patronage has a tendency to benefit only a small group of individuals.

In contrast, the patronage-based resource mobilization which aims at meeting the needs of the masses might complement the formal state fiscal stream on the expenditure side of it, as both intend to provide support to the people, and both might serve the interests of the dominant party in gaining support and building its developmental image. The difference between the two lies in the ways such spending is done: the state-based follows the due process of budgetary management, the patronage-based stream does not.

The differences between state and patronage support link this discussion to the legitimacy question. The literature on state building emphasizes the importance of building state capacity in order to establish its legitimacy through the provision of basic public services to the people. But as the case of Cambodia suggests, the formal budgetary system, despite going through years of reform, is still weak even by a low income country's standard. However, the CPP has opted to use the off-budget streams (the PWG) to build rural infrastructure for the people. By its own estimation, the PWG support is much smaller compared to the national budget, and donor support. However, this off-budget support seems to have produced a rather impressive approval rate from the people. On this, the study would like to make two related points.

First, popular legitimacy is a function of two things: the people's perceptions and the skillfulness with which the ruling party approaches to shape such perceptions in its favor. On the people's perceptions, the more demanding, active and well informed a population is, the higher the performance expected of the state (or the party that controls it). In another word, even in a weak state, demand from people can also be strong if the state has a strong society (Migdal 1988). The question is whether off-budget re-distribution (as the PWG) will be proved sufficient to meet such demand. But the party is also expected to use different strategies to shape or contain such expectations. Once again, the skillfulness of the party's leadership will make a difference here. The reality of a weak state (which also refers to the case of Cambodia) is that people in such a context tend to be low-demanding and poorly informed, which means less pressure on the ruling party to deliver.

Second, the literature often talks about state legitimacy. But, given (i) strong personalization of (public) power among the elite in developing countries, (ii) the common tendency among people to not distinguish between the state positions and the

people holding it, and (iii) the close connection among state, elite, and the party in dominant party politics (all of these are evident in the case of Cambodia), this study argues that in such a context, it is hard to distinguish between state legitimacy, party legitimacy and elite legitimacy. Going back to the question of budgets, does it make a difference then whether infrastructure projects are built through on-budget or off-budget sources? This study argues that it does not, at least as far as the legitimacy of the ruling party is concerned. The question is more about who will get the credit from the people when something gets done.

9.3.3. On politics of decentralization

The literature on decentralization so far has focused on the technical, and not so much on political aspects of the reforms. Whenever politics is mentioned, it is often examined from the donors' perspective, i.e. decentralization as a reform with democratic motives. This study provides empirical evidence to caution such idealist expectations. It argues that, actually, decentralization, when well applied, can be well in line with the political interests of the dominant party. A skillful politician who can see the big picture and is familiar with sub-national and rural politics can devise decentralization (its design and sequencing) also to further legitimize its local ruling, while still ensuring its strict central control. The case of the CPP demonstrates this well.

However, this finding does not rule out the positive impacts of the reform either. While benefiting the ruling party, decentralization has brought more stability to the local level, and in the process, built legitimacy for the state in the face of the people. Such legitimacy has been established on the ground that a new locally elected government is established, thus bringing the government closer to the people, and with that, some forms of participatory development have been initiated. Decentralization also opens a new space for donor and NGO funded projects to be implemented right at the grassroots level, and thus, giving a positive impression to the local people about the state of their local development. Even opposition parties see their own opportunities in decentralization.

The existing literature on the politics of decentralization tends to overlook another important point about decentralization: its potential impact on intra-party politics of the ruling party. This study finds that decentralization can provide incentives for the party to introduce democratic procedures into its own internal decision-making process,

allowing more discretion to its own sub-national party officials. The ruling party is keen to learn and introduce such intra-party changes so long as it does not threaten but helps strengthen its own legitimacy and administrative control. Given its dominance, such intra-party democratic promises can also be interpreted as encouraging signs for the wider local democracy initiatives.

9.4. Suggested topics for further research

If a dominant party in a weak state is an elephant and this research is a blind man touching it, the finding (or the drawing) as presented so far is the result of his touching on four different parts of the 'animal,' namely: (i) how it manages the state budget and maintains elite coalition, (ii) how it builds up and strengthens its rural administration, (iii) how it initiates and funds off-budget spending, and (iv) how it manages decentralization. By touching on these four areas, this thesis has provided a systematic explanation about dominant party politics in a weak state. However, such a political system is complicated in nature and broad in scope, which means the more areas one can touch, the more accurate a picture of it one can draw. This means new areas should be further researched. There are a number of such areas which this study would propose.

The first topic is how a ruling party has managed and adapted to economic development and transformation to ensure its dominance. Experiences from other countries such as Indonesia (especially during the Suharto's period) show that the ability of the incumbent to manage and stabilize the economy by ensuring its steady growth and controlling inequality is one of the key factors in staying in power (Case 2002). This study has only briefly mentioned (in chapters 4 and 5) the economic performance under the CPP's rule. It has shown that under the CPP, economy has grown at an impressive rate, but it has not sufficiently looked into how the CPP and its elites manage to drive, participate in and exploit the growth. This limitation should be addressed in future research.

For the case of Cambodia, recently, it has been noted that research on development and political changes has shifted its focus from the post-conflict re-construction, good governance and corruption, and international intervention to include more about the economic transformation and the roles of the state within the process. For instance, a recent edited volume on Cambodia's economic transformation (Hughes and Un 2011)

and the research agenda of a leading Cambodian research institute, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), has started to use the concept of a developmental state to better understand the dynamics underlying Cambodia's governance and institutional reforms. So by looking at these economic transformation phenomena from a dominant party perspective, a research can provide a new and complementary perspective on the ongoing debate¹⁴⁰.

Another topic deals with the relationship between a dominant party and policy reforms. This study has looked at how the CPP has dealt with budgetary and decentralization reforms. While insightful, more knowledge is still needed in this area. For instance, research can look at how other reforms such as civil service reform, pay reform, aid coordination, and those aiming at promoting civic engagement and see how differently a dominant party perceives and approaches these different reforms and why. From such research, one can learn a lot about the politics of policy reforms and move beyond the common perception that an authoritarian regime in a developing country is nothing but anti pro-poor reforms.

There is strong research interest and active debates on this particular issue. For instance, donor agencies such as the World Bank (2008) and academic institutions such as the Asian Research Centre of Murdoch University (Asia Research Centre 2010) have started to give more thought to the politics of policy reforms. From personal observations, similar concerns have also received more attention in the context of Cambodia where various reforms are going on and yet a lot still needs to be understood about why some reforms have been moving forward and others have not.

Another related topic is the role of individual elites or groups of elites in pushing for change – whether it is a change which brings stronger party dominance or a change that brings more pro-poor outcomes to development. This study has shown that elites and their coalitions have been key actors for the CPP. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that these elites are also the ones that drive policy reforms (e.g. decentralization). The study however has not collected sufficient data to really capture the bigger story about the links between elites as agents of change and the broader political context within which they operate. One way to look at this issue is to see these elites as leaders whose influence, either formal or informal, can shape the broader political dynamics.

¹⁴⁰ Personal discussion with the research team of the Governance Unit, CDRI, October 22, 2009

In Cambodia, the early seeds of research interest on this particular issue are being planted. For instance, one study was looking at local leadership and decentralization reforms (Thon et al. 2009). At the international level, donor organizations such as the World Bank and Australia's Overseas Aid Program (AusAid) have also paid more attention to the role of leadership in development. Conceptually, this means the need to 'bring agencies' back in (Leftwich 2009).

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Annexes

Annex 1. Questions for semi-structured interview

Annex 1.1. For commune councilors (who are CPP officials)

1. Background information

- 1.1. Name of the commune, district and provinces
- 1.2. Date of the interview
- 1.3. Age, occupation (beside being councilors), and education of the respondents

2. External and PWG support for development projects in the commune

- 2.1. When you were looking for external support, who do you seek support from (i.e. government, party, NGOs, etc)?
- 2.2. How do you contact them?
- 2.3. Has the district level been helpful in such effort to mobilize resource from outside?
- 2.4. How many of the projects are from the CPP's PWG?
- 2.5. Were those projects promised before election time?
- 2.6. How were those projects given and implemented? Please describe.
- 2.7. What is your estimation of the PWG's support as compared to the commune development funds and NGOs support?
- 2.8. Have there been supports to ensure the projects' regular maintenance and repair?
- 2.9. How do you think those projects have helped the people in your commune?
- 2.10. Do you think that the PWG should have supported other projects instead? If so, what are those alternative projects?
- 2.11. Have the PWG support been given equally to all the villages in your commune?

3. Perception about PWG heads and members coming to help the commune

- 3.1. Who are the key PWG members assigned to help your commune?
- 3.2. Where are those people from? What are their formal positions or business activities?
- 3.3. Do you know why they were assigned to your commune?
- 3.4. What have those PWG been helping besides funding infrastructure projects?
- 3.5. How do you think the PWG supports have helped your re-election at the commune elections?
- 3.6. What do you think you should do in return?
- 3.7. If the CPP loses the election, do you think that the PWG will continue to support your commune? Why and why not?
- 3.8. Compared to nearby communes (or any other communes that you are aware), do you think the PWG support to your commune is more or less? Why?
- 3.9. Do you think it is a recommended idea to have the PWG support channeled through the commune fund?
- 3.10. Does PWG money arrive faster than the commune fund?
- 3.11. To you, are PWG projects easier to implement than the commune-funded projects?

- 3.12. How do you think distinguish between your roles as a party official and state officials in your daily activities?

4. PWG support to pagoda?

- 4.1. How many pagodas are there in your commune?
- 4.2. Who have been the key patrons/financiers of each of those pagodas?
- 4.3. Do you know why the PWG members give support to pagodas?
- 4.4. Have those PWG members ever held public meeting in pagodas compounds?
- 4.5. What do you think of the relationship between the PWG heads or key members from the central with the head monk and pagoda committees of each pagodas?
- 4.6. How have supports to pagodas been helping you and other people in your commune?
- 4.7. Do you think the supports to the pagoda projects should have been spent on other projects instead? If so, what are those alternative projects?

5. Additional points to be observed (and asked when situations allow):

- 5.1. What are the key incentives for these commune councilors to serve the party?
- 5.2. What are the relationship between the councilors and PWG people? And district? And village authorities?
- 5.3. What are the key factors that make a commune chief influential?
- 5.4. What are the key actors that help prevent internal factors of the party?
- 5.5. How strong is the sense of ownership and of being elected representatives among the councilors?
- 5.6. Others?

Annex 1.2. With district party officials

1. Background information

- 1.1. Name of the district and provinces
- 1.2. Date of interview
- 1.3. Age, occupation (beside being councilors), and education of the respondents

2. External and PWG support for development projects in the commune

- 2.1. What is your role in relations to the commune?
- 2.2. What is your role in the PWG of the party?
- 2.3. Do you think keep a record of PWG support? If so, can you share a copy of it?
- 2.4. Can you describe the process by which such support has been given and implemented?
- 2.5. What is your estimation of the PWG's support as compared to the commune development funds (throughout the district) and NGOs support?
- 2.6. Have there been supports to ensure the projects' regular maintenance and repair?
- 2.7. How do you think those projects have helped the people in your district?
- 2.8. Do you think that the PWG should have supported other projects instead? If so, what are those alternative projects?
- 2.9. Have the PWG supports been given equally among the communes in your district?

3. Perception about PWG heads and members coming to help the commune

- 3.1. Who are the key PWG members assigned to help your districts?
- 3.2. Where are those people from? What are their formal positions or business activities?
- 3.3. Do you know why they were assigned to your districts?
- 3.4. What have those PWG been helping besides funding infrastructure projects?
- 3.5. How do you think the PWG supports have helped the party win at the commune elections in your district?
- 3.6. What do you think you should do in return?
- 3.7. If the CPP loses the election, do you think that the PWG will continue to support your district? Why and why not?
- 3.8. Compared to nearby districts (or any other districts that you are aware), do you think the PWG support to your district is more or less? Why?
- 3.9. Do you think it is a recommended idea to have the PWG support channeled through the commune fund?
- 3.10. Does PWG money arrive faster than the commune fund?
- 3.11. To you, are PWG projects easier to implement than the commune-funded projects?
- 3.12. How do you think distinguish between your roles as a party official and state officials in your daily activities?

4. PWG support to pagoda?

- 4.1. How many pagodas are there in your district?
- 4.2. Who have been the key patrons/financiers of at least five of those pagodas?
- 4.3. Do you know why the PWG members give support to pagodas?

- 4.4. Have those PWG members ever held public meeting in pagodas compounds?
- 4.5. What do you think of the relationship between the PWG heads or key members from the central with the head monk and pagoda committees of each pagoda?
- 4.6. How have supports to pagodas been helping you and other people in your district?
- 4.7. Do you think the supports to the pagoda projects should have been spent on other projects instead? If so, what are those alternative projects?

5. Additional points to be observed (and asked when situations allow):

- What are the key incentives for these district party officials to serve the party?
- What are the relationship between the districts and PWG people? And provinces? And communes?
- What are the key factors that make a district governor influential?
- What are the key actors that help prevent internal factors of the party?
- Others?

Annex 2. Questions for the survey with local people

Annex 2.1. With 'Better informed local people'

1. Background information

- 1.1. Name of the district and provinces
- 1.2. Date of interview
- 1.3. Age, occupation (beside being councilors), and education of the respondents

2. More background information of the respondents (Can choose more than, if needed)

- 2.1. S/he identified as 'Better Informed Local People' because s/he is:
 - Close to the local authority
 - Wealthy
 - Educated
 - Close to the pagodas
 - Long time resident of the commune
 - Others. Please specify.....
- 2.2. The kinds of works they have do in/for the community:
 - Official works (such as those carried out by village chiefs, etc)
 - Facilitation works (Please specify.....)
 - Local resource mobilization
 - Gift distribution
 - Money lending
 - Teaching
 - Religious activities
 - Others. Please specify
- 2.3. Reasons why s/he has kept doing those community works:
 - Merit-making
 - Financial benefits
 - Image building among their peers
 - Expected to be helped in return
 - Others. Please specify.....
- 2.4. Reasons that make him or her influential among his/her peers:
 - Personal characters and outspokenness
 - Skillful at mobilizing resources from outside the commune
 - Close relations with powerful people at the higher level
 - Understanding of other people needs
 - Good past personal achievements and contribution to the community
- 2.5. His or her relationship with the commune authority: Close/ Not close (why?)
- 2.6. His or her relationship with the pagoda: Close/ not close (why?)

3. Knowledge about PWG its development supports

- 3.1. How many projects do you know that have been implemented in your commune?
 - a. Please list them.....
- 3.2. Who are the key PWG people do you know that help fund those projects?
 - a. Yes/No

- b. Please list them.
- 3.3. How do you know of such information?
 - a. Please describe
- 3.4. Are you aware of the process of by which such support is given?
 - a. Yes/No
 - b. (If Yes) Please describe.....
- 3.5. Have there been projects that were promised, but not delivered?
 - a. Yes/No/don't know
- 3.6. In your perception, can you say how big is the PWG support compare to the commune fund?
 - a. Smaller/similar/bigger/don't know
 - b. More specific (if possible)
- 3.7. How do you think the projects help the people in the commune?
 - a. Please describe.....
- 3.8. Do you those supports should be given to other projects instead?
 - a. Yes/No
 - b. (If yes) Please indicate alternative projects.....

4. Perception about commune and other local authorities

- 4.1. Among all the members of the councils, who do you know as the most active in mobilizing resource from outside?
 - a. Names.....
 - b. How do you know?.....
- 4.2. Do you know how s/he (they) do it?
- 4.3. How is her/his relationship with the PWG and higher CPP people?
- 4.4. Do you think it is a good idea that he asks for support from PWG?
- 4.5. Are you aware of the process by which the PWG support is managed? And how do you know?

5. Perception about the PWG people

- 5.1. Who are the key PWG members assigned to help your districts?
- 5.2. Where are those people from? What are their formal positions or business activities?
- 5.3. Do you know why they were assigned to your districts?
- 5.4. What have those PWG been helping besides funding infrastructure projects?
- 5.5. If the CPP loses the election, do you think that the PWG will continue to support your commune? Why and why not?

6. PWG support to pagoda?

- 6.1. How many pagodas are there in your district?
- 6.2. Who have been the key patrons/financiers of those pagodas?
- 6.3. Do you know why the PWG members give support to pagodas?
- 6.4. Have those PWG members ever held public meeting in pagodas compounds?
- 6.5. What do you think of the relationship between the PWG heads or key members from the central with the head monk and pagoda committees of each pagoda?
- 6.6. How have supports to pagodas been helping you and other people in your commune?

- 6.7. Do you think the supports to the pagoda projects should have been spent on other projects instead? If so, what are those alternative projects?

Annex 2.3. With ‘Ordinary local people’

1. Background information

- 1.1. Name of the district and provinces
- 1.2. Date of interview
- 1.3. Age, occupation (beside being councilors), and education of the respondents

2. Knowledge about the PWG support

- 2.1. What are the projects do you know that have been implemented in your commune and the sources of such supports?
 - a. Project 1:.....
 - b. Project 2:.....
 - c. Project 3:.....
 - d. Project 4:.....
- 2.2. How do you know of such information?
 - a. How 1:
 - b. How 2:
 - c. How 3:

3. What benefits do you think you will get the projects?

- a. Benefit 1
- b. Benefit 2
- c. Benefit 3

4. Do you know who are in the commune councils?

- a. Name 1.....
- b. Name 2.....
- c. Name 3.....
- d. Name 4.....

5. Do you know what the councils have been doing?

- a. Activities 1.....
- b. Activities 2.....
- c. Activities 3.....
- d. Activities 4.....

6. Do you know of the budget of the communes?

- a. Yes/No
- b. What do you know.....

7. What do you remember about the party’s (or PWG’s) support/projects?

- a. Project 1
- b. Project 2
- c. Project 3
- d. Project 4

8. Who are in the PWG that you remember?

- a. Name 1.....
- b. Name 2.....
- c. Name 3.....

d. Name 4.....

9. Do you know why they help your commune?

- a. Reason 1.....
- b. Reason 2.....
- c. Reason 3.....

10. Do you know why they have pagoda?

- a. Reason 1.....
- b. Reason 2.....
- c. Reason 3.....

11. Do you know if the PWG support to your commune is more or less compared to the commune nearby?

- a. Yes/No
- b. How different.....

ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ



ខេត្ត:

សាលា:

តារាងសមិទ្ធិផលដែលបានគណនាក្នុងឆ្នាំ III (២០០៣-២០០៤)

ល.រ	នាមឈ្មោះសមិទ្ធិផល	ចំនួន	តំលៃ-ខ្នាត	កម្រៃបង់	តម្លៃ	ឧបត្ថម្ភផោយ
១	២	៣	៤	៥	៦	៧
	ក/ វិស័យ សេដ្ឋកិច្ច					
1.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2002	15000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
2.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	2 (គ្រូ)	10 ខែ	2003	50000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
3.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2004	20000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
4.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2004	20000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
5.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2007	20000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
6.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2008	17000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
7.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2007	20000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ
8.	សេវាសិក្សាវិទ្យាល័យបឹងកក់.ស្រែ	1 (គ្រូ)	5 ខែ	2007	18000 ៛	សម្រាប់បង់ប្រាក់ប្រចាំខែ

ត្រកូល

សមិទ្ធិសំខាន់ៗរបស់រាជរដ្ឋាភិបាលនិងថ្នាក់ដឹកនាំគណបក្ស

ល.រ	ឈ្មោះរូប	សមិទ្ធិសំខាន់ៗរបស់រាជរដ្ឋាភិបាល											សមិទ្ធិសំខាន់ៗរបស់គណបក្ស										
		សាលារៀន	ផ្ទះ	ស្ថាន ភូមិ	ស្រូវ ទឹក	ព្រះ វិហារ	មណ្ឌល សុខភាព	ទំនប់	ប្រឡាយ	ស្ថានីយ៍ បូមទឹក	អាគារ ទឹក	ស្បៀង សម្រាប់ ពលកម្ម	សាលារៀន	ផ្ទះ	ស្ថាន ភូមិ	ទំនប់	ប្រឡាយ	ស្រូវ ទឹក	ស្ថានីយ៍ បូមទឹក	មណ្ឌល ទឹក	ស្បៀង សម្រាប់ ពលកម្ម	ស្បៀង សម្រាប់ ពលកម្ម	
១		១ខ្នង	៣ខ្សែ	៥កន្លែង	០	០	១	០	៤	០	០	៣១គ	៣ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	០	៧	០	០	១	០	១០	៦ខ្សែ	០
២		៣ខ្នង	៦ខ្សែ	៧ ៨	១២	១	១	៦	១២	០	២៥	០	១០គ	៣ខ្នង	១ខ្សែ	២	៥	០	១	០	១	៦ខ្សែ	០
៣		៥ខ្នង	៣ខ្សែ	១៧ ២១	៦	០	១	១	០	០	៤៣	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	១៤	១គ	០
៤		៣ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	១៧ ១	០	០	០	១	៤	០	១៥	០	២៥គ	៣ខ្នង	០	០	០	០	០	០	១៣	៣ខ្សែ	០
៥		២ខ្នង	៦ខ្សែ	៣៧ ២២	៤១	១	១	១	៣	០	៧៣	០	៦គ	២ខ្នង	០	១	៥	០	១	០	២៦	១គ	០
៦		៤ខ្នង	៣ខ្សែ	៣៧ ៦	០	០	១	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	៧	១គ	០	
៧		៧ខ្នង	៥ខ្សែ	២៧ ៧	១៤	០	១	០	៦	០	៥៨	០	០	៤ខ្នង	១ខ្សែ	០	០	០	០	១	១១	១គ	២១.៧គ
៨		២ខ្នង	៥ខ្សែ	១៧ ១៥	១១	១	០	០	៤	០	២៥	០	០	២ខ្នង	០	០	៦	០	០	០	៨	១គ	០
៩		១ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	៧២ ៤	១	០	០	០	៦	០	១៣៥	៦ គ	៨.៥គ	០	០	០	០	០	០	២១	១គ	០	
១០		៣ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	៣៧ ៥	៣	១	០	២	៣	០	១៦	៣ គ	៦០គ	២ខ្នង	៣ខ្សែ	១	៥	០	០	០	២០	៥.៥គ	០
១១		៨ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	៧៧ ២៥	១៧	២	១	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	១	៤	១	០	១៨	៣ខ្សែ	៥គ
១២		៣ខ្នង	៣ខ្សែ	៧៧ ៣	៣	៣	១	០	៥	០	៣២	០	០	០	៥ខ្សែ	១	៥	២	០	១	២១	១គ	០
១៣		៣ខ្នង	៥ខ្សែ	០	០	១	០	០	៥	០	២១	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	០	៧	១គ	០	
១៤		៣ខ្នង	៥ខ្សែ	៣៧ ៧	៤	០	០	០	៤	០	១០	៤.៥គ	១៨.៥គ	៣ខ្នង	១ខ្សែ	១	៣៥	០	៦	០	៣៦	៣.៥គ	០
១៥		០ខ្នង	២ខ្សែ	១៧ ១២	១	០	០	០	៣	០	០	៤.៥គ	៤.៥គ	០	១ខ្សែ	០	៣	០	១	៤	៥គ	៧គ	
សរុប		៤៨ខ្នង	៤៨ខ្សែ	២០៧ខ្នង ២៦ កន្លែង	១១៣	១០	៥	១១	៥៥	០	៤៨៧	៥៨.៥គ	៣៧១គ	២២ខ្នង ២៨ ផ្ទះ	១៤ខ្សែ	៦	៧៥	៣	១១	១	២២២	៦៨.១គ	៨៦.៧គ

ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

ខេត្តកំពង់ចាម

ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ

ស្រុកតាដាយ

អំណោយឯកខត្តម

១. វិស័យសេវា

ល.រ	ឈ្មោះ សាលា	ឈ្មោះ ឃុំ	ចំនួនអាគារ	ចំនួនបន្ទប់	អាណត្តិទី	ផ្សេងៗ
១	បឋមសិក្សា	១	០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈ
២	បឋមសិក្សា	១	០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៣	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៤	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៥	បឋមសិក្សា		០២	០៦	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៦	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៧	បឋមសិក្សា		០២	១០	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
៨	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	២	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
សរុប អាណត្តិទី ២			១០	៤៦		
៩	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយ ឯ. និងលោកជំទាវ
១០	អនុវិ. ហណាហ		០៤	២០	៣	អំណោយ ឯ. និងលោកជំទាវ
១១	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
១២	បឋមសិក្សា	១៥	០១	០៤	៣	អំណោយ តាមរយៈឯ.
១៣	វិទ្យាល័យ		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយពីរខុយហ្គាល់ តាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៤	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយពីរខុយហ្គាល់ តាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៥	បឋមសិក្សាតាំង	១៥	០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយពីរខុយហ្គាល់ តាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៦	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយពីរខុយហ្គាល់ តាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៧	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយពីរខុយហ្គាល់ តាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៨	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយជំនួសតាមរយៈ ឯ.
១៩	បឋមសិក្សា	១	០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយឡាយអំនុក្ខិបតាមរយៈឯកខត្តម.
២០	បឋមសិក្សា		០១	០៥	៣	អំណោយឡាយអំនុក្ខិបតាមរយៈឯកខត្តម.
សរុប អាណត្តិទី៣			១៥	៧៤		
សរុបបេតិកភណ្ឌវិទ្យាស្ថាន អាណត្តិទី២-៣			២៥	១២០		